

LAST MEMORIES

མཇུག་མཐའི་དྲན་པ།

A MDO TIBETAN TRIBAL
LIVES: RDOR JAG AND THANG TA

ཀླུ་ཐར་རྒྱལ། KLU THAR RGYAL
with
CK STUART & SAMI HONKASALO

LAST MEMORIES: Amdo Tibetan Tribal Lives
Klu thar rgyal with CK Stuart & Sami Honkasalo

AHP 59

LAST MEMORIES

A mdo Tibetan Tribal Lives: Rdor jag and Thang ta

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

□□□□□□□□□□□□ Klu thar rgyal
with

CK Stuart & Sami Honkasalo

ACCLAIM

Compelling history in its careful treatment of the perplexing search for "manhood," social placement and meaning, and religious practice and belief - particularly *lha pa* 'spirit mediums' - gives great value to Klu thar rgyal's grandfather's and great-aunt's meticulous accounts of ordinary life among herders in the 1929-1958 era among A mdo tribes. This extraordinary work, packed with tragedy, violence, and the most tender of moments emphasizes the value of ethnographic work, while also challenging the mindless embracing of modern transformations. Sketches by the principal informant's grandson, photographs, maps, the author's nuanced interpretations and insights, and much more, further enrich this valuable addition to the study of nomad Tibetan life recounted by those who lived it, provoking the question: "What *should* students of the past focus on?"

-Rinchen Khar (Rin chen mkhar □□□□□□□□□□□□)
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Extraordinary memories from ordinary Tibetans living a challenging nomad life south of Qinghai Lake in China provide important supplementary historical accounts missing from mainstream Tibetan and Chinese histories. Events described occurred as power shifted to the Communist Party in Qinghai from the Ma Bufang regime. Tibetologists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and novelists *need* to read this book.

-Li Jianfu □□□ (Libu Lakhi, Zla ba bstan 'dzin □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□)
Qinghai Normal University□□□□□□

Last Memories gives us entrée into a historical period and region in A mdo rarely featured in written accounts through the life experiences/ storytelling of two Mang ra elders. Klu thar rgyal renders his own people's tribal and ancestral history via local voices he trusts and whom, in turn, entrust their stories to him. The author's curiosity in his community's past and the narrators' accounts provide a valuable resource for posterity. *Last Memories* fills one of many lacunae toward a clearer understanding of modern A mdo history and culture in general, and Mang ra people's livelihood in particular.

-Choni Namgyal Tsepak (Co ne tshe dpag rnam rgyal □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□) Cornell University

Tibetan tribal lives are revealed in memory collections from two narrators in the context of the early twentieth century to 1958 in an A mdo "frontier" area, where government control, including that of the brutal Ma Family regime, failed to bring law or order. Bandit raids, blood revenge, kinship obligations, and exodus characterize the precarious life of this pastoral, tribal existence. Love, weddings, relationships, marmot hunting, foodways, measures of wealth, illness, and shamanistic rituals detail this presentation of tribal lives. Photographs, maps, and footnotes validate these local accounts compiled and presented by the local author familiar with his home community. Often beyond conventional imagination, *Final Memories* challenges historians to prioritize often impassioned local accounts that offer insight into the past that exist nowhere else.

-Gengqiu Gelai (Konchok Gelek, Dkon mchog dge legs □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□) University of Zurich

Klu thar rgyal's powerful presentation of non-fiction, life narratives of two elders seizes the reader's attention, vividly illustrating the great transformations occurring in the 1929-1958 period in Eastern Tibet, a time often overlooked in contemporary studies.

-Duo Dala (Stobs stag lha □□□□□□□□□□□□) International Institute
of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Last Memories presents vivid memoirs of A mdo Tibetan tribal men and women living in the 1930s and into the twenty-first century, chronicling a tumultuous period of social unrest. Richly detailed ethnographic accounts include bandit raids, livestock stealing and revenge, territorial battles, the death of loved ones, and negotiations and compensation stemming from livestock theft and resultant killings. Women's lives include arranged marriage, childbirth, illness and death, and struggles for free love. These life accounts also include esoteric beliefs and practices such as *sher* rituals to determine guilt or innocence, mountain deity worship, spirit mediums, catching evil spirits in a leather bag to cure ailments; heavy taxation by the Ma warlord government, conflict with Ma officials, flight to a neighboring province to avoid taxes, and return home; and communal life and class struggles in the 1950s. This valuable oral history of A mdo is essential reading.

-Kelsang Norbu (Gesang Nuobu, Skal bzang nor bu) □□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□

Colorful prayer flags, mountain ranges where countless sheep and yaks graze, valleys and riverbanks, smoke wafting to the sky from small clusters of black yak-hair tents scattered on the grassland… such quiet idyllic scenes suggest Tibetan herdsmen on the Plateau grasslands living in legendary Shambala. Eating, herding, shearing sheep, milking, collecting yaks, repairing tents, searching for lovers, treating illness with spirit mediums possessed by mountain deities, weddings, death, and so on reveal a world that is also one of hatred, revenge, cursing practices, bandit raids, gunshots, and banditry among the tribes in the pre-1958 period. Klu thar rgyal's grandfather and great-aunt recount their A mdo Tibetan lives between 1929-1958 in today’s Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. Names of yaks, sheep and horses are also provided. This impressive work offers valuable insight into traditional Tibetan herding culture.

-Limusishiden, Qinghai University Affiliated Hospital

Last Memories' first-hand stories of the pre-1958 period narrated by the author's close relatives and skilfully woven together, reflect A mdo Tibetan community existence in regions ruled by feudal and tribal authorities. Tribal norms and customs emerge, presenting a holistic portrayal of life familiar to the ordinary Tibetans who lived it and describe it from personal experience. In the second decade of the 21st Century, unprecedented social changes have delegated that world to fading memories. Essential reading for historians, anthropologists, and Tibetan Studies specialists.

-Dpal ldan bkra shis □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Humboldt University zu Berlin

Few communities on earth have experienced the abrupt, extreme changes Tibetan communities faced in the twentieth century. The narratives in this extraordinary work on lived experiences of ordinary, individual historical actors are invaluable. Enriching the literature of contemporary Tibetan history, this is a must-read.

-Tshe dpal rdo rje □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ University of Canterbury

Stealing, killing, and revenge were embedded in the lives and culture of Tibetan bandits not because of poverty, but to prove masculinity to "bolster their reputation, prove their bravery, receive more recognition from their home community." Certain bandits "snatched lambs while they were on horseback and put them into their robe pouch." Some Tibetan nomads "burned the surface of the wool of all their lambs while they were alive, to prevent bandits from stealing, killing, and skinning" them. Forced marriage at a young age was common and married women "returned to their natal home only once a year because of the distance and fear of encountering bandits."

Tibetan nomads travelled widely on the back of yaks and horses with their livestock. Little children "were put inside milk churns" on long journeys. New encounters, retelling stories, and bandit attack were common in A mdo areas where Tibetan elders never ran short of stories to tell. Such narratives are seldom heard today and are on the verge of fading away.

Last Memories gives significant insights into the lived lives of Tibetan nomads during dangerous times. It details forced marriage, divination, deities, clothing, ornaments, the Tibetan New Year, marmots and pikas, livestock, animal naming, livestock tax collection, kidnapping, local justice, rulers, conflicts, revenge, and disease. This invaluable contribution records endangered oral histories of a

significant time, place, and people that would otherwise go unheard.

-Nyangchakja (Snying lcags rgyal □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□)

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my[1] maternal grandfather, Bu lo, and my maternal great-aunt, Lcags mo byams.

□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□

E-MAIL: ahpjournal@gmail.com

HARD COPY: www.lulu.com/asianhp

ONLINE: https://bit.ly/2SOtjtE

ISSN (print): 1835-7741
ISSN (electronic): 1925-6329
Library of Congress Control Number: 2008944256

CALL NUMBER: DS1.A4739

SUBJECTS: Uplands-Asia-Periodicals, Tibet, Plateau of-Periodicals
All artwork contained herein is subject to a Creative Commons, Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License. You are free to quote, copy, and distribute these works for non-commercial purposes so long as appropriate attribution is given. See https://goo.gl/nq06vg for more information.

COVERS: (FRONT) Bu lo, 2018, painted by Dpal rgyal. (BACK) Lcags mo byams, 2018, photographed by Dpal rgyal.

CITATION: Klu thar rgyal □□□□□□□□□□□ with CK Stuart and Sami Honkasalo. 2020. Last Memories - A mdo Tibetan Tribal Lives: Rdor jag and Thang ta □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

EDITORS

CK Stuart, Tshe dbang rdo rje □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□, and Rin chen rdo rje □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

COPY EDITORS

Sarge, Gabriella Samcewicz, Dpal ldan bkra shis □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□, and Pad+ma rig 'dzin □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

EDITORIAL BOARD

Barbara Brower *Portland State University*

Caihuan Duojie (Caihua Dorji; Tshe dpal rdo rje □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□) *University of Canterbury*

Daniel Miller *USAID*

Duojie Zhaxi (Dorje Tashi, Rdo rje bkra shis □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□) *University of Colorado*

Fernanda Pirie *University of Oxford*

Gengqiu Gelai (Konchok Gelek, Dkon mchog dge legs □□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□) *University of Zurich*

Hildegard Diemberger *University of Cambridge*

Huadan Zhaxi (Dpal ldan bkra shis □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□) *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*

Jermay Jamsu ('Gyur med rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□) *Independent Scholar*

Juha Janhunen *University of Helsinki*

Keith Dede *Lewis and Clark College*

Kelsang Norbu (Gesang Nuobu, Skal bzang nor bu □□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□) *Independent Scholar*

Kunchok Benzhou ('Bum phrug □□□□□□□□) *London School of Economics and Political Science*

Lhamodrolma (Lha mo sgrol ma □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□)

Mark Bender *Ohio State University*

Nyangchakja (Snying lcags rgyal □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□) *Independent Scholar*

Renqingka (Rin chen mkhar □□□□□□□□□□□□) *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

Rigdrol Golok (Rouzhuo; Rig grol □□□□□□□□□) *Victoria University, Australia*

Shamo Thar (Sha mo thar □□□□□□□□) *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

Toni Huber *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*

Tsering Bum (Cairangben, Tshe ring 'bum □□□□□□□□□□□□□) *Emory University*

Veronika Zikmundova *Charles University*

ASIAN HIGHLANDS PERSPECTIVES

Asian Highlands Perspectives (*AHP*) is a trans-disciplinary journal focusing on the Tibetan Plateau and surrounding regions, including the Southeast Asian Massif, Himalayan Massif, the Extended Eastern Himalayas, the Mongolian Plateau, and other contiguous areas. Cross-regional commonalities in history, culture, language, and socio-political context invite investigations of an interdisciplinary nature not served by current academic forums. *AHP* contributes to the regional research agendas of Sinologists, Tibetologists, Mongolists, and South and Southeast Asianists, while also forwarding theoretical discourse on grounded theory, interdisciplinary studies, and collaborative scholarship.

AHP publishes occasional monographs and essay collections both in hardcopy (ISSN 1835-7741) and online (ISSN 1925-6329). The online version is an open-access source, freely available at https://bit.ly/2SOtjtE. The print edition is available to libraries and individuals at-cost through POD publisher Lulu.com at https://goo.gl/rIT9lI. The journal currently has a core editorial team of three members and a consultative editorial board of experts from a variety of disciplines. All submissions to the journal are peer-reviewed by the editorial board and independent, anonymous assessors.

AHP welcomes submissions from a wide range of scholars with an interest in the area. Given the dearth of current knowledge on this culturally complex area, we encourage submissions that contain descriptive accounts of local realities - especially by authors from communities in the Asian Highlands - as well as theory-oriented articles. We publish items of irregular format - long articles, short monographs, photo essays, fiction, auto-ethnography, etc. Authors receive a PDF version of their published work. Potential contributors are encouraged to consult previous issues.

CONTENTS

ACCLAIM <2>

DEDICATION <7>

CONTENTS <12>

ILLUSTRATOR <17>

ABBREVIATIONS <17>

LOCATIONS <18>

■ FIG 1. China, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mang ra (Guinan) County. <18>

■ FIG 2. Place names (Wylie). <19>

■ FIG 3. Place names (Tibetan script). <20>

■ FIG 4. Place names (Chinese). <21>

■ FIG 5. Lo's family's journey from Tsha nag to the Bsang khog grassland in 1944. <22>

PEOPLE, PLACE NAMES, AND MONASTERIES <23>

■ Table 1. People. <23>

■ Table 2. Place names. <30>

■ Table 3. Monasteries. <34>

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION <35>

■ Lcags mo byams <37>

■ Part One <38>

■ Part Two <41>

- ■ Lo's Current Life <42>
- ■ Lcags mo byams' Current Life <43>

■ Relevant Literature <43>

■ Conclusion <44>

PHOTOGRAPHS <45>

■ FIG 6. Dam chen Deity. <45>

■ FIG 7. Thang ta Lha pa's amulet, a book of chants, and *dbu zhwa'i tog*. <47>

■ FIGS 8 and 9. The *dbu zhwa'i tog* and its woolen bag. <48>

■ FIGS 10 and 11. Thang ta Lha pa's texts written in gold and silver. <49>

■ FIG 12. Remains of Mchod rten Monastery. <50>

■ FIG 13. A ma lcam Mountain. <51>

■ FIG 14. Incense altar on Bsang ri Mountain. <52>

■ FIG 15. Bsang ri Mountain. <53>

■ FIG 16. Yul lha Deity Temple, Khri ka County Town. <54>

■ FIG 17. A black yak-hair tent. <55>

■ FIG 18. Sheep dung pellet divination by women. <56>

■ FIG 19. A wedding in Tsha nag Community. <57>

■ FIG 20. Rdor jag tribeswomen braid a bride's hair. <58>

■ FIG 21. Braiding a bride's hair. <59>

■ Fig 22. A cloth with shell-shaped silver ornaments. <60>
■ Fig 23. Singing love songs at a traditional wedding. <62>
■ Fig 24. Thang ta tribeswomen prepare food for guests. <63>
■ Fig 25. Lo chats with Phag mo thar. <64>
■ Fig 26. Lo and Phag mo thar chat. <65>
■ Fig 27. Lcags mo byams. <66>
■ Fig 28. Lo and Yul lha thar chat at a local ritual. <67>
■ Fig 29. Kun thar skyid visits her father, Lo, on the day of his ninetieth birthday. <68>
■ Fig 30. Rgya mtsho and Lcags mo byams. <69>
■ Fig 31. Lo at his great-granddaughter's wedding. <70>
■ Fig 32. Two local Tsha nag Community women chat. <71>
■ Fig 33. Gnam lha mkhar holds his granddaughter. <72>
■ Fig 34. Lo and Yul lha thar chat. <73>
■ Fig 35. Lo and Klu thar rgyal. <74>

Part One: Lo <75>

1: My Birth, Name, and Tribe <76>

2: Banditry <78>

■ Fig 36. Bandits have tea at noon. <79>

3: Divination, *Gnyan*, and Tantric Practitioners <82>

■ Divination <82>

■ *Gnyan* <84>

4: Bare Feet, Clothing, and Ornaments <87>

■ Clothing <87>

■ Ornaments <88>

5: Ma Bufang's Officials Collect Taxes <89>

■ Fig 37. Lo herded hundreds of sheep. <91>

6: Local Heroes <92>

■ Stod pa and His Brothers <92>

■ Conflict with So nag Community <93>

■ Ku mur's Death and Revenge <97>

7: Marmots and Pikas <104>

■ Marmots <104>

■ Pikas <110>

8: Guilt or Innocence? Hot Oil, A Red-Hot Ax, *Rtsam pa* Balls, and Yul lha Deity <112>

■ Hot Oil <112>

■ Red Hot Axes <113>

9: Fleeing Ma Bufang's Taxes in 1944 and Sick Livestock <116>

■ Conflict and Negotiation with Ma <116>

■ Fleeing with a Group of Families <119>

■ Conflicts with Mgon shul Community <121>

■ Reunion with Thang ta Tribe Families from the Homeland <122>

■ Contagious Livestock Disease <123>

10: Return Home From Bla brang Territory in 1947 <124>

■ Lo sar <125>

■ Return Home <127>

11: Kidnapped, Sworn Friends, and Farming <129>

■ Kidnapped and Held for Ransom in a Tent <129>

■ Sworn Friends <130>

■ Farming in the Herding Area <130>

■ Fig 38. Two yaks plow a field. <132>

12: Mother's Death in 1948 <133>

13: Dating and Revenge <138>

■ Dating <138>

■ Revenge <139>

14: Lo's first marriage <141>

■ A Local Young Man's Marriage <141>

■ My First Marriage <142>

■ An Elaborate Wedding <144>

■ Fig 39. The bride covered her face with both robe sleeves. <150>

■ Fig 40. Singing love songs at a wedding. <151>

15: Lo divorces and Remarries, and Bridewealth <152>

16: Lo's Last Bandit Raid (1950) <155>

Part Two: Lcags mo byams <157>

17: Little brother, Chos lo, and Father's Death <158>

■ Little Brother's Death <158>

■ Father's Death <160>

■ Fig 41. Little Brother and I inside milk churns for the journey back to our homeland from Bla brang. <162>

18: My Unexpected Marriage <163>

■ Uncle's Incarnation <163>

■ Second Sister <164>

■ My Unexpected Marriage <165>

■ Fig 42. Sha bo entered our tent as I milled barley. <167>

19: Seriously ill and a *Dpon*'s Exorcism <168>

■ Very Ill <168>

■ Cured by a *Dpon* <171>

20: Rdor jag Lha pa's Life and Death <172>

21: Beautiful woman, Unclean Bones <176>

22: Hosting Guests, Repairing Tents, and Shearing Sheep <178>

23: Learning to Dance, Tsi b+he Promises

Her Mother-in-law <180>

■ Dance <180>

■ Tsi b+he Promises Her Mother-in-law <182>

24: Gcod pa thar's Last Birth <183>

■ Fig 43. Gcod pa thar didn't milk much. <186>

APPENDIX ONE: Names of Yaks, Sheep, and Horses by Bu lo, Klu thar rgyal, and Sami Honkasalo <187>

■ Table 4. Yak names: general names, male (horned, polled), female (horned, polled), and color. <189>

- ■ Table 5. Yak names: age. <193>
- ■ Table 6. Sheep names: horned, polled, and color. <195>

■ Table 7. Sheep names: gender and age. <197>

- ■ Table 8. Horse names: color. <199>

■ Table 9. Horse names: age. <202>

APPENDIX TWO: Further Reading <204>

REFERENCES <210>

TIBETAN AND CHINESE TERMS <216>

■ Tibetan Terms <216>

■ Chinese Terms <234>

ILLUSTRATOR

Dpal rgyal (b. 1991, Klu thar rgyal's brother) was awarded second place for his photographs at the 2016 Mtsho sngon Province Disabled Persons Vocational Skills Competition.[2] Certain illustrations were edited online at https://bit.ly/2JT7zW3.

ABBREVIATIONS

LT = Literary Tibetan
MAC = Mongolian Autonomous County
MLBR = Mtsho lho bod rigs rang skyong khul nang bstan mthun tshogs dang krung go'i bod brgyud nang bstan mtho rim slob gling nang bstan zhib 'jug khang
TAP = Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture

LOCATIONS

FIG 1. China, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mang ra (Guinan) County.[3]

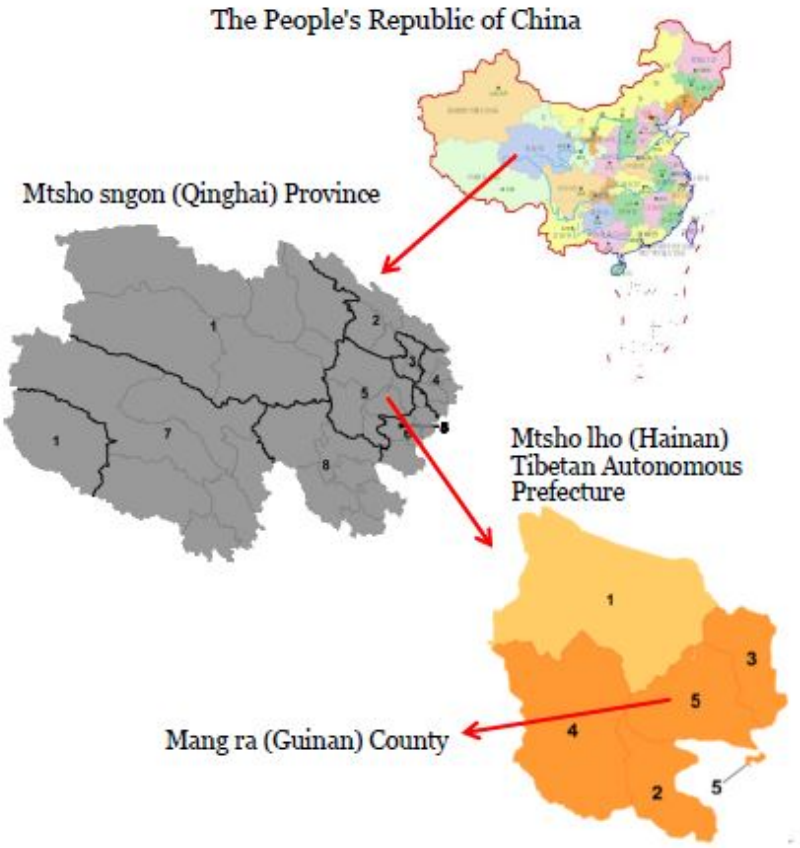

The People's Republic of China
Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
Mang ra (Guinan) County

FIG 2. Place names (Wylie).[4] A ma lcam Mountain, Brag dkar, Bsang ri Mountain, Chos tsha, Co ser, Ka rgya, Mang ra, Mdo rtse Ravine, Mgo mang, Mu ge thang, Rta ra, Sde skor, and Tsha nag (Mang ra County, Mtsho lho TAP); 'Ba' and Bcud par rdza rgan Mountain ('Ba' County, Mtsho lho TAP); Dme shul, Bon rgya, and Rtse khog (Rtse khog County, Rma lho TAP); Bsang chu and Rgan gya (Bsang chu County, Kan lho TAP, Gansu Province); Lha sde, Khri ka, Rol lce, Ser rgya, and Stong che (Khri ka County, Mtsho lho TAP); Mgon shul and So nag (Reb gong County, Rma lho TAP); Nyin mtha' and Sog po (Rma lho MAC, Rma lho TAP); Zhis tshang (Klu chu County, Kan lho TAP); and Zi ling (Xining City, Mtsho sngon Province).[5]

FIG 3. Place names (Tibetan script).[6]

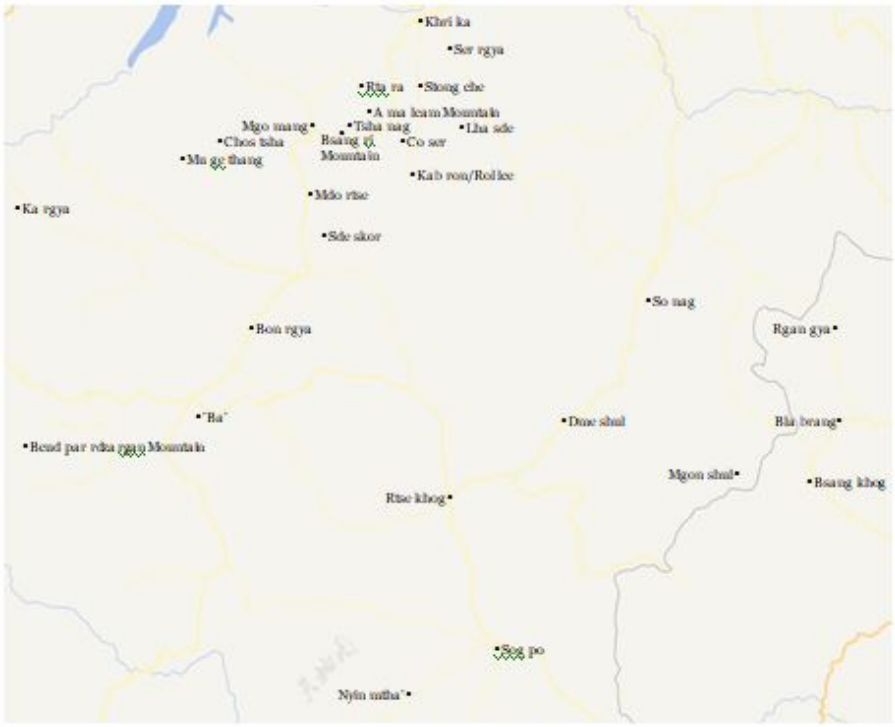
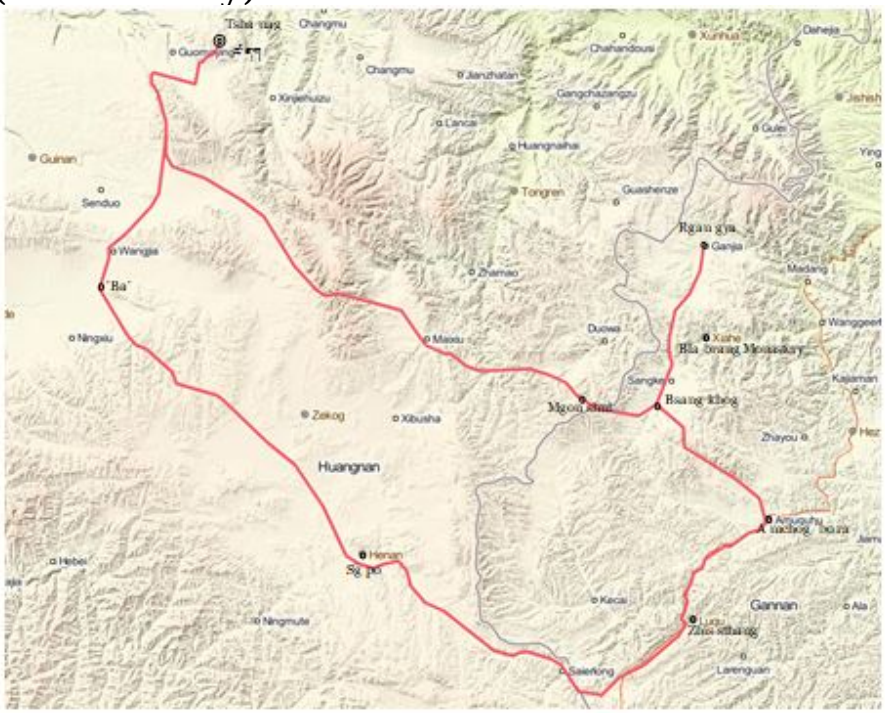




FIG 4. Place names (Chinese).[7]



FIG 5. Lo's family's journey from Tsha nag to the Bsang khog grassland in 1944. The red line indicates the journey Lo's family made from their homeland in Tsha nag (Mgo mang Township) to the Bsang khog grassland (Bsang chu County) in 1944. Three years later, they returned to Tsha nag. To avoid attack from Mgon shul (Chu khog/Qukuhu) Township, Reb gong County), they traveled through Zhis tshang (Klu chu County), Sog po (Rma lho MAC), and 'Ba' ('Ba' County).[8]



PEOPLE, PLACE NAMES, AND MONASTERIES

Table 1. People.

Name	Description	Tribe
'Bu kha	a brave man who stayed with Sher b+hu and a wounded young man after they were attacked	Rdor jag
'Jam dpal (b. 1921)	Bu lo's nonreligious friend, Rdor jag Lha pa's[9] son	Rdor jag
A pa a blo/Bla dpon a blo[10]	A pha a blo (1903-1997, *aka* Apa Alo, Losang Tsewang, Huang Zhengqing) was a key individual in one of the last functioning Tibetan communities that used the *chos srid zung 'brel* 'unity of religious and political authority system' (Nietupski 2009A).[11]	
A rda	a marksman with Stod pa who shot at a horseman from So nag	Thang ta
A tho (b. 1957)	Lo's oldest living son (in 2019)	
Bla ma a this	head *bla ma,* A this Monastery	
Bo bza' u rgyan	A rich man who owned 10,000 sheep in the Hor Area. His daughter fell in love with a poor man from Tsha nag.	
Bu lo (Lo, b. 1929)	the narrator of Part One, my maternal	Rdor jag

	grandfather	
Chos lo	Lcags mo byams' adoptive mother and Ku mur's wife	
Dme shul 'jigs ser	a sharpshooter from the Dme shul Area	
Dpal ldan	a one-time leader of Tsha nag Community	
G.yang rgyal	He and Tshe phyug were accused of stealing livestock. After a local trial, they were found innocent and awarded livestock to compensate for being falsely accused.	Rdor jag
G.yang tho	Rgya mtsho's friend went on pilgrimage with Lcags mo byams	Thang ta
Gcod pa thar (1933-2008)	Klu thar rgyal's maternal grand-mother, Lo's second wife, Klu rgya's[12] oldest daughter, and sister to Lcags mo byams. Her father arranged her first marriage.	Rdor jag
Gnam lha mkhar (b. 1976)	Lo's youngest son	Rdro jag
Grags pa rgyal mtshan	the leader of the Nag chu area	
Klu mo yag (b. 1938)	Lcags mo byams' second sister (Klu rgya's second daughter). Her father arranged her marriage to a boy from a wealthy	

	family in the Ka rgya Area.	
Klu mtsho/U mtsho, 1880? -1958	wife of Stod pa	
Klu rgya	Lo's wife's father and Lcags mo byams' father. He was a sharpshooter whose fellow tribesmen respected and obeyed him.	Thang ta
Klu thar rgyal (b. 1993, author)	son of Kun thar skyid, Lo's grandson	Thang ta
Ku mur	Mgon rgya's son, Sha bo's brother, and Thang ta Lha pa's grandson. He died on the way to take revenge for his broken arm.	Thang ta
Lcags lo	He and other Thang ta tribesmen stole horses from the Nyin mtha' Area. The horse owners followed them and killed two of Stod pa's brothers.	Thang ta
Lcags mo byams (b. 1940)	Klu thar rgyal's great-aunt, Gcod pa thar's sister, the narrator of Part Two. In 1955, when fifteen, she was forced to marry Rgya mtsho, who was ten years her senior. Over time, the couple	

	became true companions	
Lha rgod thar (b. 1967)	one of Lo's sons, who was adopted by Tshe rgya when he was a child	Rdor jag
Lo	Bu lo's nickname	Rdor jag
Lo rgya (1925-1997?)	a man who owned a good rifle brought from A mchog 'bo ra that was taken forcefully by men from the Sde skor Area	Thang ta
Lcags lo	He and other Thang ta tribesmen stole horses from the Nyin mtha' Area. The horse owners followed them and killed two of Stod pa's brothers.	Thang ta
Lcags mo byams (b. 1940)	Klu thar rgyal's great-aunt, Gcod pa thar's sister, the narrator of Part Two. In 1955, when fifteen, she was forced to marry Rgya mtsho, who was ten years her senior. Over time, the couple became true companions	
Mdzod dge dpon po	Lord of Mdzod dge Territory	
Mgon rgya	Thang ta Lha pa's son (Ku mur and Sha bo's father)	Thang ta
Mkha' mo	Lo's granddaughter	

rgyal (b. 1995)		
Mtsho mo	a hospitable hostess, who did not eat much when she visited other homes	
Ngag dbang	a one-time leader of Tsha nag Community	
Nor b+he	a dance teacher who taught locals every afternoon	
O rgyam	A brave man and Ku mur's friend. He killed the man who killed Ku mur.	Thang ta
Phag mo bkra shis	The leader of the Rol lce Area. He came to Tsha nag looking for lost bulls.	
Phun tshogs (1936-1958)	Lo's brother, who became a monk after his mother died	
Rdi lo	a strong man skilled at catching horses	Rdor jag
Rdo rje bsam grub	Lcags mo byams and Rgya mtsho's great-grandson	
Rdor jag Lha pa	a *lha pa* 'spirit medium' from the Rdor jag Tribe, who held rituals in both Lo's and Lcags mo byams' tents	Rdor jag
Rig 'dzin (1897-1958)	Lo's father. Injured during a bandit raid,	Rdor jag

	he later used a walking stick.	
Rig b+ha	A man who owned a good rifle brought from A mchog 'bo ra. The rifle was taken forcefully by men from the Sde skor Area.	Thang ta
Rin chen	Sha bo's adopted son and Tsi b+he's husband	Thang ta
Rgya mtsho (b. 1930)	Lcags mo byams' husband and Sha bo's nephew; lived with Lcags mo byams after his uncle arranged their marriage	
Rnga ba blo bzang	he had an important position in Bla brang Territory, and helped Thang ta tribesmen	
Rta bo	Gcod pa thar's first husband. Their fathers arranged their marriage.	Rung chung
Sde skor dbu mdzad	the leader of the Sde skor Area	
Sgrol ma mtsho (1944-2018)	Yul lha thar's wife	
Sha bo (?-1958)	Lcags mo byams' husband's uncle, Ku mur's brother, and Thang ta Lha pa's	Thang ta

	grandson. Tribesmen respected and obeyed him. He was the wealthiest person in Tsha nag Community before the chaos of 1958.	
Sher b+hu/ Thang ta mtshams pa[13]	Thang ta Lha pa's son and Stod pa's brother. After two of his brothers were murdered, he became insane but recovered after meditating.	Thang ta
Shes rab	a handsome man who fell in love with Bo bza' u rgyan's daughter in the Hor Area	
Smar khams tshogs gnyis	a famous tantric practitioner who was defeated by Rdor jag Lha pa	
Sog po rgyal mo bang a ma	female chief of the Sog po Territory	
Stod pa	A brave man, Thang ta Lha pa's son, and Sher b+hu's brother. Locals enjoyed telling stories about his bandit raids.	Thang ta
Ston pa	Lo's friend. He and his friends went to the Rol lce Area, drove some bulls back home without being	

	detected, and butchered them.	
Thang ta Lha pa	A famous spirit medium, who had four sons (Stod pa, Sher b+hu/Thang ta mtshams pa, Mgon rgya, unknown). The sons were well-known for their bravery and ability to defend their tribe and nearby tribes from outsiders.	Thang ta
Tsi b+he	Lcags mo byams' best friend and Rin chen's wife. She did not leave her husband's home during the period of chaos.	
Tshe 'phel	Ku mur and Sha bo's nephew and Rgya mtsho's half-brother	
Tshe phyug	He and G.yang rgyal were accused of stealing livestock. After a local ritual, they were found innocent and awarded livestock to compensate for being falsely accused.	Rdor jag
Tshe ring	a strong man who could easily control a horse with his hands	Rdor jag
Tshe rgya	He divined the future by examining burned sheep shoulder blades. He adopted Lo's second son.	Rdor jag

Xu	a Chinese leader, who gathered local men and held a feast in Rta ra	
Yar 'phel	Dpal ldan's servant	
Yum skyabs	the last spirit medium in Tsha nag and nearby communities; 'Jam dpal's son and Rdor jag Lha pa's grandson	Thang ta
Yul lha thar (b. 1947)	Klu thar rgyal's paternal grandfather	
Zhi mo thar	Klu rgya's brother, who died on a bandit raid. Lcags mo byams was considered his incarnation.	Thang ta

Table 2. Place names.

Name	Administrative Location (2018)
'Ba'	'Ba' (Tongde) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
A mchog 'bo ra	A mchog (Amuquhu) Township, Bsang chu (Xiahe) County, Kan lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province
Bla brang	Bsang chu (Xiahe) County, Kan lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province
Bon rgya	Bon rgya (Wangjia) Township, Rtse khog (Zeku) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Bon skor	Village, Bya mdo Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Brag dkar	Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Bsang khog	Bsang chu (Xiahe) County, Kan lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province
Chos tsha	Chos tsha (Qiecha) Community, Mgo mang (Guomaying) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Co ser	Co ser (Juese) Community, Mgo

	mang (Guomaying) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Dme shul	Dme shul (Maixiu) Township, Rtse khog (Zeku) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Ka chu	Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province
Ka rgya	Thar shul (Taxiu) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Khri ka	Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Lha sde	Lha sde (Lade) Community, 'Phrang dmar (Changmu) Township, Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Mang ra	Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Mchod rten	Mchod rten Valley, Tsha nag Community, Mgo mang (Guomaying) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province

Mdo rtse	Mdo rtse Ravine, Mgo mang (Guomaying) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Mdzod dge	Bsang chu (Xiahe) County, Kan lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province
Mgo mang	Mgo mang (Guomaying) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Mgon shul	Mgon shul (Guanxiu) Community, Chu khog (Qukuhu) Township, Reb gong (Tongren) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Mu ge thang	Mgo mang (Guomaying) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Nyin mtha'	Nyin mtha' (Ningmute) Township, Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, (Qinghai) Mtsho sngon Province
Rgan gya	Bsang chu (Xiahe) County, Kan lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province
Rol lce	Kab ron (Gamatang) Township, Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan

	Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Rta ra	Rta ra (Dala) Community, Mgo mang (Guomaying) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Sde skor	Ban shul (Wanxiu) Community, Sum mdo (Senduo) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Ser rgya	Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
So nag	So nag (Suonaihai) Community, Chu khog (Qukuhu) Township, Reb gong (Tongren) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Sog po	Rma lho (Henan) Mongolian Autonomous County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Stong che	Stong che (Dangche) Valley, Khri ka (Guide) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Tsha nag	Tsha nag (Chanaihai) Community, Mgo mang

	(Guomaying) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Zi ling	Zi ling (Xining) City, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province
Zhis tshang	Klu chu (Luqu) County, Kan lho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province

Table 3. Monasteries.

Monastery	Description
A this	A Dge lugs monastery located in Kab ron Valley, Khri ka County sponsored by A this bstan pa rgya mtsho. The sixth incarnation, Dge 'dun bstan pa rgya mtsho, moved the monastery to the upper valley of Kab ron in 1914. There were about eighty monks before 1958.[14]
Jo khang	founded by Sa paN kun dga' rgyal mtshan in 1244, Jo kgang/Jo jo lha khang is located in Khri ka County[15]
Lha dkar bo	founded by Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, the head of Rong bo Monastery, it is located on the south bank of the Yellow River, eleven kilometers from Khri ka County Town[16]
Mchod rten	In 2019, Mchod rten referred to one place. References give different histories: [1] Mchod rten Monastery (Tsha nag pad dkar chos gling) was located in Ra dmar Valley, Tsha nag Community, Mgo mang Township. It was founded by Dge bshes don grub with the help of fifteen *smyung gnas pa* 'people fasting' in 1930. There

were about fifty monks before 1958. It moved to Skye longs Valley, Tsha nag Community after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).[17]

[2] Known as Tsha nag mtshams khang 'hermitage', it was founded in 1923 by the leader of the Tsha nag Community, Don grub (1893-1958), who began studying Buddhism at the age of eight and often fasted. Don grub built a three-room chanting hall that accommodated five monks. In 1958, there were forty-five monks. It was an important site where locals offered incense.[18]

INTRODUCTION

Literature is the art of discovering something extraordinary about ordinary people, and saying with ordinary words something extraordinary.

I don't like people who have never fallen or stumbled. Their virtue is lifeless and it isn't of much value. Life hasn't revealed its beauty to them.

What is laid down, ordered, factual is never enough to embrace the whole truth: life always spills over the rim of every cup.

Surprise is the greatest gift which life can grant us.

-Boris Pasternak[19]

I am Klu thar rgyal of the Thang ta Tribe. My mother is Kun thar skyid, the daughter of Lo of the Rdor jag Tribe. This book focuses on the life of Lo, my maternal grandfather, and his experiences and memories. Lo's life was unrecorded. Motivated by reading oral history accounts in *Asian Highlands Perspectives*, I spent time in 2016 and 2017 listening and learning more about Lo's[20] long, extraordinary life, and the life of his second wife, my grandmother, Gcod pa thar, and the life and times of her sister, Lcags mo byams.

Our home at the time of this writing (2019) is in Tsha nag (Chanaihai) Community, Mgo mang (Guomaying) Township, Mang ra (Guinan) County, Mtsho lho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province, the People's Republic of China.

I decided to interview Lo and visited him with questions that I had prepared. To my surprise, he laughed and said, "Your questions remind me of the time I was detained, and soldiers asked what I had done each year since I was eight-years-old. I was told to confess everything."

I needed to change my approach. Fortunately, local elders frequently visited Lo, and they invariably chatted about the past, certain old people, and relations between people, e.g., Lo might have asked, "How is X related to Y?"

As the elders chatted, I asked for more details and heard various background stories. I never witnessed a time Lo and elders had nothing to talk about when they were together.

I spent much of my winter and summer holidays in 2016 and 2017 with Lo and other local elders to learn more. Despite Lo's age, he tended his family's sheep during the day, and I herded with him when I visited. While we were alone outside, he felt free to describe night dating, which he was uncomfortable to talk about at home in front of his family members. Over time, and after I told him my questions were related to my study, Lo willingly answered, telling me whatever he could remember when I asked for more details related to previous conversations. He was happy to share what he knew and had experienced, believing it might help me.

During the Tibetan New Year period of 2018, my family invited both Lo and my paternal grandfather, Yul lha thar, to my home to spend the night. They discussed the past and various elders, both living and departed, providing me with more material.

There were no contradictions when I asked Lo about the ages of people and raised questions about relatives who had been dead for many years. His memory is phenomenal, which is evident in the many details he provided, e.g., the local names for yaks, sheep, and horses (see Appendix One). He also gave his exact age at the time of an event he was recounting. He frequently paused while talking, and then would say more about what I had asked. I learned to be patient before introducing another topic. Lo also needed to rest for a while after chatting for three hours or so.

Locals are reluctant to talk about past sensitive experiences and hesitant to repeat accounts of deceased people, fearing that what they say will spread and gossip and rumors will return to them. As Lo's beloved grandson, he trusted me, and there was no boundary between us while he was narrating.

When I talked with Lo, I pressed my phone's audio record button. I took few written notes while chatting with

elders to avoid discomfort. After returning home, I listened to the recorded audio and took notes. I marked what I wanted to know more about and readied questions for the next meeting.

LCAGS MO BYAMS

Lo was uncomfortable talking about his departed wife, Gcod pa thar (my maternal grandmother), so I decided to visit her sister, Lcags mo byams, to learn more.

Lcags mo byams's adobe-wood, four-room house is located in the same ravine as Lo's home. Whenever I visited Lo, my mother asked me to visit Lcags mo byams and her husband (Rgya mtsho) and take them milk in empty beverage bottles. Mother thought the old couple needed milk when they were observing *sdom pa srung*.[21] When I visited them, they often sat on the *hu tse* 'raised, heatable sleeping-eating platform' in the family's cooking, sleeping, and eating room, which is where they also chanted.

Lcags mo byams was talkative, energetically gesturing as she talked and was enthusiastic about sharing what she remembered. Lcags mo byams and Rgya mtsho seemed to take turns, reminding each other of information they had not told or added to details to what the other was unclear about. This is how I learned, for example, about Rdor jag Lha pa[22] whom I had known nothing.

Lcags mo byams and her sister had married when they were teenagers and lived near each other. I was thus able to obtain detailed information about my maternal grandmother, their father (Klu rgyal), and Lcags mo byams' own life. I also made audio recordings of my conversations with Lcags mo byams and her husband.

In writing this book, I assembled all the inter-connected narratives into categories based on the content and arranged them in chronological order. I listened to each recording ten times or so as I was writing this text to avoid losing details. In Part One, I recount the memories and stories of Lo. My great-aunt, Lcags mo byams, speaks to us in Part Two. The two narrators provided tightly linked narratives that I have written in the first person. I recount what Lo and Lcags mo byams told me without exaggeration.

PART ONE

Lo's father, my great-grandfather (Rig 'dzin), gradually lost feeling in one of his legs and, by the age of twenty-five, he used a walking stick. He attributed the cause of this disability to tantric practitioners' curses when he had stolen livestock. Lo's mother, my great-grandmother, complained of abdominal pain and, despite treatment by a local spirit medium and several monks, passed away in the family's black yak-hair tent at the age of forty-four in 1948.

Lo was married twice. His father arranged his first marriage to a woman from a wealthy family. His father held an elaborate wedding that involved receiving about fifteen uncooked sheep carcasses as wedding gifts. Nevertheless, the marriage soon ended, followed by a second marriage to Gcod pa thar, who had fled from her previous husband's home. Lo and Gcod pa thar had become lovers during their time in Bla brang (described later).

Lo describes banditry, a vital part of men's lives during Lo's youth.[23] *Skyes ho rob*[24] 'real men' were expected to steal from outside their home community, bring back what they had stolen and share it with their bandit team and their camp members. They could build reputations as powerful, famous men by crafting and telling spell-binding stories about their exploits for local consumption.

Lo vividly depicts revenge - often related to banditry - by local heroes[25] such as Stod pa and Sher b+hu for their slain brothers and Ku mur, who died on a mission of revenge. Lo adds his own experience of being kidnapped and held for ransom by a distant community. Revenge, like banditry, was common, and local men were expected to take revenge, which had the potential to add to their notoriety.

Religious practitioners are also important to this narrative. Rdor jag Lha pa, for example, was a local herder who engaged in banditry. While performing as a religious specialist to expel evils troubling locals, both male and female deities possessed him. Lo also gives examples of women who divined at home.[26]

Lo's accounts of the local justice system provide insight into how guilt or innocence was determined. Such

judgments - *sher* - required putting a finger in a pot of bubbling oil or holding a red-hot ax and throwing it after taking three steps. For example, Lo personally observed strangers accusing his uncle of stealing their horses, which they had found near Lo's camp. The horse owners then demanded *sher* after a long debate.

Lo is the last living person among his peers who fled on a two-month journey with their families and livestock to the Bla brang area in the 1940s to evade Ma Bufang's onerous taxes. Ma Bufang ordered Lo's family to lead the tribe because it was the wealthiest among the Rdor jag Tribe members at that time. When Ma government[27] representatives came to collect taxes, and locals were unable to provide what was requested, Lo's family had to pay what they owed. This was the main reason Lo's family fled to Bla brang, where they nomadized for three years. Lo describes the difficulties his family encountered, including livestock disease and conflict with neighboring communities while in Bla brang.

Lo's tribe was predominantly engaged in herding livestock. Tibetan tents frequently appear in the text, as do descriptions of herding livestock. Barley was also cultivated, which required plowing with one or two yaks for several days, burning soil to make fertilizer, and harvesting the barley in autumn, spreading the dried barley stalks on the ground, using sheep to trample back and forth over the spread-out stalks to thresh the grain, and then transporting barley grain by yaks to agricultural areas to trade for wheat flour.

Finally, I visited Lo with a map. As he described each place that his family and others went on their trip to and from the Bla brang Territory, I reconstructed the route (see the maps at the beginning of this book).

PART TWO

In this section, Lcags mo byams, my maternal grandmother's sister, speaks to us. Born in 1940, she grew up with an older neighboring woman, whom she called "Mother." At the same time, she lived near her biological parents and went back and forth between the two families.

Lcags mo byams' father was killed when she was eleven. She felt he would return one day so was not much bothered. In contrast, she suffered terribly when her little brother died the same year, realizing that her only playmate would never return.

Lcags mo byams' father arranged for her sister, Klu mo yag, to marry at the age of thirteen. Klu mo yag returned home only once a year because of the distance and fear of encountering bandits.

When Lcags mo byams was fifteen, she was forced to marry Rgya mtsho, who was ten years her senior. At the age of eighteen, Lcags mo byams became ill and was treated by Rdor jag Lha pa. She describes these healing rituals vividly and also how Rdor jag Lha pa became a spirit medium, and his behavior when he was possessed. When A ma lcam, a female mountain deity, possessed him, he behaved like a woman, covering the lower part of his face with a robe sleeve and shaking his other sleeve. She also mentioned Rdor jag Lha pa's grandson - the last spirit medium in our home community - who performed a ritual for my maternal grandmother when she was giving birth.

Lcags mo byams details how Gcod pa thar resisted her first marriage. Her father's death meant that no one forced her to return to her husband's home. She then stayed in her mother's home and eventually married Lo.

LO'S CURRENT LIFE

In 2019, ninety-year-old Lo had three sons and two daughters[28] and lived with his youngest son, Gnam lha mkhar, as is the local custom. Each day, he herds his family's 300 sheep. In winter, he is invited to attend his relatives' traditional marriage engagement negotiations and weddings, where he plays an important role. Locals believe his presence ensures that all will go smoothly.

Lo complains that his eyesight is no longer as keen as it once was. Consequently, he lives on the grassland where everything is familiar, rather than in the local township town where he had stayed for a half-decade in a two-room apartment his family purchased in 2006 with support from his youngest son. He also cared for grandchildren who were attending the township primary school. There were interesting things to see and to hear in the township town, he commented, and he was able to meet many people there.

Lo hopes his life will end as suddenly as turning off a light and that this will occur before he loses his sight completely. He hastened to add, though, that he was happy and satisfied with his current life when I asked him if he preferred life nowadays or in the past when he was much younger. He said transportation and health care are much better than in the past, and added:

If we were poor, there was a day we could become rich again, maybe in our generation or in the next generation. But once a person passes away, they are forever gone. For example, my father, brother, and oldest son passed away in 1958. Uncle died from starvation in 1961. But for the next fifty years, it was *kha na kha sems dal ba* 'everyone was healthy, and nobody died in the family' until I was eighty. At that time, my wife, Gcod pa thar, passed away. That fifty-year period was the happiest time in my life.

LCAGS MO BYAMS'S CURRENT LIFE

Lcags mo byams and her husband, Rgya mtsho, had no biological children, so they adopted Lo's second son, Ban de thar, when he was a child. The couple now lives with their great-grandson, Rdo rje bsam grub, in our township town,

where he attends primary school. During school holidays, they return to Tsha nag Community. Lcags mo byams and Rgya mtsho are locally considered a model couple. After sharing many experiences, they have become true companions.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

Published modern texts about Mang ra history include works in Tibetan, e.g., Dam chos rgya mtsho (2002), Btsun kho (2004), Ye shes bzang po (2001), Hor gtsang 'jigs med (2009), Lcam rig sras (2011), and Chab 'gag rdo rje tshe ring (2006); and Chinese language studies, e.g., Guinan County Compilation Committee (1996) and Chen Qingying (1990).

Works on men born in the early nineteenth and early twentieth centuries include Bya gzhung blo bzang (2006), Blo bzang bstan pa rgya mtsho and Dge 'dun bstan pa dar rgyas (1994), and Rje blo bzang rgya mtsho's (2012). These texts reflect the viewpoint of the authors who were followers of the religious personalities that these works feature, and provide little detail of local Mang ra life.

The only life narratives of ordinary people from Mang ra that I am familiar with are the English-language accounts by Nangchukja (2015) and Tsering Bum (2013), which are in English. Nangchukja described his paternal grandmother's (Lha mtsho, b. 1946) early life in the Bon skor Village area of Bya mdo Township. Lo and Lha mtsho had several similar experiences. Both lived an important part of their early lives in the pre-1958 era, and both had locally important fathers. Both also confronted challenges in marriage, and extreme difficulties and great poverty during the chaos of 1958, the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), and the Cultural Revolution.

As a youth, Tsering Bum's grandfather escaped with his family from Dpa' lung (Hualong) to a village near the Yellow River in Dar mtsho (Xinghai) to avoid being forced into Ma Bufang's army. Meanwhile, Lo fled to the Blab rang territory from Mang ra with his family for three years to avoid paying the Ma government's heavy taxes. A difference is that while Tsering Bum's grandfather did not return to

his homeland after the collapse of the Ma government, Lo's family did.

CONCLUSION

These materials reflect the lived experiences of ordinary people as told by those I trust and who have never lied to me. The experiences they shared touched me deeply. Lo once told me that what he experienced when he was much younger was easy to recall, but what he planned to do today was challenging to remember.

I have added two appendices. One lists the names of livestock that Lo remembered. I thank Sami Honkasalo for writing these names in the International Phonetic Alphabet. The second appendix reviews publications relevant to historical accounts of Mang ra.

There is much more that these two elders know and experienced. The time I spent with them was limited, and as time passes, I wished that I had asked more questions and acquired more details. As I re-read what I wrote, I am acutely conscious of my limitations as an oral historian. I hope to have other opportunities to talk to Lo, my great-aunt, and other elders. I do not want their stories to die with them or with me.

PHOTOGRAPHS

FIG 6. After Thang ta Lha pa passed away, his son, Stod pa, was responsible for Thang ta Lha pa's belongings. He gave some to his own (Stod pa) two sons, Lo rgya and Rig 'dzin. Lo rgya received Thang ta Lha pa's amulet, his primary chanting book, a *dbu zhwa'i tog* 'wooden image placed on a small button in the middle of the top of a hat', and an image of Dam chen Deity,[29] whom Thang ta Lha pa worshipped and who possessed him during rituals. Stod pa's wife (Klu mtsho/U mtsho) hid these articles in a pile of ash near her tent in 1958, and again during the Cultural Revolution. Rig 'dzin acquired Thang ta Lha pa's *dbu zhwa* 'sacred hat', and other of Thang ta Lha pa's religious implements, but left

them behind when they fled to the Bla brang area with other Thang ta Tribe families in 1944.

Thang ta Lha pa worshipped this particular image of Dam chen Deity. He hung it in his tent and consulted it when performing rituals (Tsha nag Community, 4 April 2018, Dpal rgyal).



FIG 7. The triangular object wrapped in black fabric was Thang ta Lha pa's amulet, which he fastened to the yellow cloth and wore around his neck. His book of chants is

wrapped in red fabric. His *dbu zhwa'i tog* is in a woolen bag (left). Thang ta Lha pa affixed the *dbu zhwa'i tog* atop his hat before performing rituals. Locals believed no weapon could harm him when he wore his amulet on bandit raids (Tsha nag Community, Mgo mang Township, 4 April 2018, Dpal rgyal).



FIGS 8 and 9. The *dbu zhwa'i tog* and its woolen bag. Thang ta Lha pa put a scripture written on a small roll of paper in a hole at the back of this wooden image (Tsha nag Community, 4 April 2018, Dpal rgyal).



FIGS 10 and 11. Texts written in gold and silver that belonged to Thang ta Lha pa (Tsha nag Community, 4 April 2018, Dpal rgyal).





FIG 12. Remains of Mchod rten Monastery, located in Ra dmar Valley, A ma lcam Mountain. Locals once lived nearby in black yak-hair tents. Before 1958, wealthy families often stored their silver ornaments, various clothes, and barley in the monastery when they moved with their livestock. The prayer flags mark the location of the main temple of the monastery that was destroyed in 1958. After the Cultural Revolution, the monastery moved to Skye longs Valley in Tsha nag Community. In 2018, there was one nun at the monastery. These were the only indications of a monastery in Tsha nag Community (Tsha nag Community, 8 April 2018, G.yang byams).



FIG 13. This photo was taken in front of Lo's house[30] (Tsha nag Community, 19 February 2018, Klu thar rgyal). A huge *bsang khri* 'incense altar' and four huge poles with prayer flags had been placed on A ma lcam Mountain. Locals have worshipped this mountain's female deity for generations. When locals urgently wanted to consult A ma lcam through Rdor jag Lha pa, he behaved like a woman, covering his lower face with one robe sleeve and shaking his other sleeve like a girl. Lo gave the following account:

Once three Brag dkar Mountain brothers had three mountain sisters. Lcam, the middle sister, married A myes 'ba' tshe in Tsha nag Community according to her parents' arrangement. She soon left her husband and set out for her parents' home. On the way, she met a handsome deity, fell in love, and lived with him. Her lover is a mountain near A ma lcam Mountain - A myes ja brgya.

Ra dmar Valley is west of A ma lcam Mountain. To the east is Bab ris Community. A ma lcam Mountain separates the two communities.



FIG 14. The incense altar on Bsang ri Mountain, with four prayer flagpoles. This is Bsang ri Deity, the most powerful and aggressive deity in Tsha nag Community. During rituals, only Rdor jag Lha pa was possessed by Bsang ri.

Rdor jag Lha pa's wife survived starvation and the period of communal work. She grew very old and, remarkably, was still healthy when more than one-hundred-years-old. Her relatives noticed a snake slithering out from under her bed and asked a spirit medium to divine if her advanced age was good or evil. The spirit medium replied that Rdor jag Lha pa's wife's spirit was possessed by a deity and that she might live longer. He ordered the family to offer a living goat atop Bsang ri Mountain. Rdor jag Lha pa's wife passed away soon after this sacrifice (Tsha nag Community, Mgo mang Township, Mang ra County, Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, 2 March 2018, Rdo rje).



FIG 15. Bsang ri Mountain among local mountains (Tsha nag Community, August 2017, Klu thar rgyal).



Bsang ri

□□□□□□□

FIG 16. Yul lha Deity Temple, Khri ka County Town. Various rituals were historically held to identify a thief. One ritual involving Yul lha Deity was *lha la gtugs pa* 'accuse to the deity' in the Stong che farming area. A family who had lost something invited the small image of Yul lha Deity, which was in a sedan and carried from its temple at the bottom of Stong che Valley in Khri ka. The ritual was held with a spirit medium. When the spirit medium was possessed, a family representative made a request, and the deity sedan would move and become so heavy that four strong men were required to carry it. The sedan moved until it stopped in front of the gate of the thief's home (Khri ka County, 26 February 2017, Klu thar rgyal).



FIG 17. A black yak-hair tent. The right part of the tent[31] was considered the man's place. Male guests were asked to sit in the right part of the tent, which was a show of respect. The left part of the tent was considered the area where women should sit. To make it more mobile when they were on the move, locals pitched only half of their yak-hair tent.

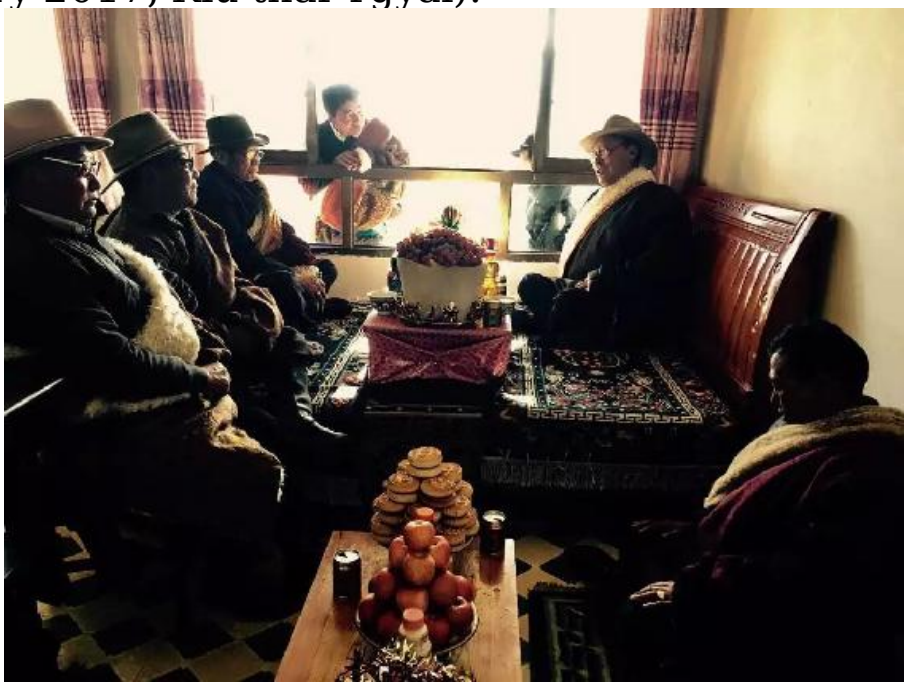
The first house Lo lived in was built by his family in the 1970s and served as their winter quarters. No Rdor jag Tribe members lived in black yak-hair tents in about 2016. This photograph was taken in 'Ba' County (19 July 2018, Klu thar rgyal).



FIG 18. Women from the Rdor jag Tribe practiced divination secretly in their own homes to see if an absent husband was safe and if he would return soon. Men never asked women to divine. One divination method involved cutting each of three sheep dung pellets into two pieces, creating six pieces that were called *bya pho drug mo drug* 'six male birds and six female birds'. One side of the pellet pieces was considered male, and the other side was considered female. Most women divined using six pellet-halves, but a few women used twelve or two. A woman held the pieces in her left hand after shaking them in her right hand, while praying to her mountain deity and chanting. She repeated this process three times. She then gave an interpretation according to the orientation of the pieces of sheep dung in her left palm (Tsha nag Community, 1 April 2018, Klu thar rgyal).



FIG 19. Tshe 'phel's (second from left) grandson's wedding in Tsha nag Community. Tshe 'phel is Ku mur and Sha bo's nephew and Rgya mtsho's half-brother. Local elders sat and chatted with elders from the bride's side. At around noon, the groom's family arranged for the bride's younger escorts to sing love songs with young, local, unmarried women. Most people moved to the love song party. Female singers and other women stood in front of male singers during the singing. Older women also came and found a place where they could easily hear the songs and see the singers. They chatted about who among the bride's escorts had the nicest voice and the largest repertoire of songs. Men who were embarrassed in front of their female relatives when they heard love songs, entered the tent and listened to the bride's older escorts and local elders' conversation, though they could still hear the love songs (Tsha nag Community, 2 February 2017, Klu thar rgyal).



20. Rdor jag tribeswomen braid the hair of the bride (Mkha' mo rgyal, Lo's granddaughter). The night before the wedding, the bride's family members and neighboring women got up at two AM, woke the bride, and told her to sit near a lamp. One of her sisters and one of her sisters-in-law sat near her with a comb decorated with white tufts of white sheep wool and a basin of water mixed with milk,

which was used to comb her hair. One of her brothers came with a bowl of wheat liquor. The Eight Auspicious Symbols

FIG 20. Rdor jag tribeswomen braid the hair of the bride (Mkha' mo rgyal, Lo's granddaughter). The night before the wedding, the bride's family members and neighboring women got up at two AM, woke the bride, and told her to sit near a lamp. One of her sisters and one of her sisters-in-law sat near her with a comb decorated with white tufts of white sheep wool and a basin of water mixed with milk, which was used to comb her hair. One of her brothers came with a bowl of wheat liquor. The Eight Auspicious Symbols[32] decorated the outside of the bowl. As he began singing the hair combing song, he used his right ring finger to flick liquor into the sky from the bowl he held in his left hand. Two women then began combing the bride's hair and plaiting it into small braids. The song often made the neighboring women, the bride's girlfriends, and especially the bride's mother weep. They were happy the bride had found a new home but were sad that she was leaving. After half an hour, the song ended, and women came to finish the plaiting (Tsha nag Community, 2 February 2017, Klu thar rgyal).



FIG 21. Kun bzang skyid, the second daughter of Rgya mtsho and Lcags mo byams' adopted son, Ban de thar, has her hair plaited by her female relatives in the early morning of her wedding day. Older male relatives sat nearby and observed until the end of the plaiting. Next, a few eloquent senior relatives and some young singers (male relatives) were expected to escort the bride to the groom's home. They set off very early in the morning of the wedding day (Tsha nag Community, 7 April 2018, Dpal rgyal).



FIG 22. A *dmar gdan*[33] hangs from the back of a young bride (Glang sgron skyid), from the Thang ta Tribe. Various, colorful, long cloth strips hang from both sides of the *dmar gdan*. The bride also wears a *tshar zhwa* 'lambskin hat'. She had just finished dressing and is now ready to go to the groom's home with her escorts. The bride also wears a *tshar zhwa* 'lambskin hat' (Tsha nag Community, 24 March 2017, Dpal rgyal).



FIG 23. A time for singing love songs at a traditional wedding in the home of Tshe 'phel (Ku mur and Sha bo's nephew and Rgya mtsho's half-brother). The singing began as the bride's escorts sat outside. Women stood in front of them. About five meters separated the male singers and local girls. It was winter and cold, but nobody minded. Everyone enjoyed the singing (Tsha nag Community, 2 February 2017, Klu thar rgyal).



FIG 24. Thang ta tribeswomen chat while preparing food for guests at a wedding (Tsha nag Community, 2 February 2017, Klu thar rgyal).



FIG 25. Lo (right) chats with Phag mo thar (left) from the Rdor jag Tribe. Phag mo thar had just returned from a wedding where he had represented the bride's side as the main orator. He described his conversations with local elders, the replies the groom's side gave, and the number of singers. Phag mo thar also reported that an elder from the bride's side sang a very good traditional song that he had not heard for years. The two discussed how traditional songs were changing and how they no longer heard songs from the time when they were young (Tsha nag Community, 18 February 2017, Klu thar rgyal).



FIG 26. Lo (left) and Phag mo thar (right) had not met for a long time. They talked until midnight and continued chatting the following morning. Phag mo thar's father was one of Ku mur's best friends and died the same year as Ku mur. Phag mo thar explained that most of Ku mur's bandit team members died the same year, including his father, because a *bla ma* cursed them for stealing his horse and other property.

Lo chats with Phag mo thar while drinking milk tea in Lo's home under morning sunshine. Meanwhile, Lo's daughter-in-law was milking in the yak enclosure, and his son was driving the family's sheep to the mountain. When there were no guests, Lo drove the sheep to the mountain and counted them every morning and afternoon, to ensure none were missing (Tsha nag Community, 19 February 2017, Klu thar rgyal).

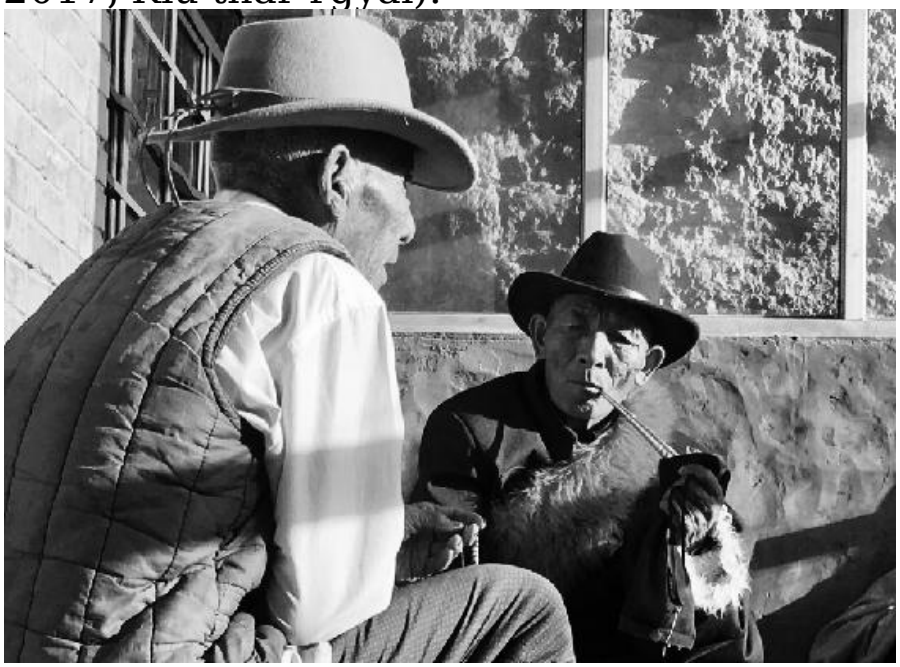


FIG 27. Lcags mo byams was a locally renowned orator in Tsha nag Community and often invited to local traditional weddings. When she spoke, her voice was high, and she was energetic, gesturing vividly. She was interested in relationships between deceased elders and consulted Lo when she needed clarification.

Lcags mo byams and Lo's second wife were sisters and closely resembled each other. Lcags mo byams' other older sister (Klu mo yag) lived far away. Lcags mo byams had met her only a few times after Klu mo yag married at the age of thirteen.



Lcags mo byams was talkative and very energetic while describing her childhood (Tsha nag Community, 19 August 2017, Klu thar rgyal).

28. Lo (second from right) and Yul lha thar (first right) met during a local ritual. They met only once or twice a year. Yul lha thar's wife (Sgrol ma mtsho, left) listens to their conversation (Thar shul Township, 28 June 2017, Dpal rgyal).

FIG 28. Lo (second from right) and Yul lha thar (first right) met during a local ritual. They met only once or twice a year. Yul lha thar's wife (Sgrol ma mtsho, left) listens to their conversation (Thar shul Township, 28 June 2017, Dpal rgyal).



Lo and Yul lha thar's father (Lo rgya) went on bandit raids together. Lo and Yul lha thar arranged a marriage between Yul lha thar's second son (Rdo rje, b. 1971) and Lo's younger daughter (Kun thar skyid, b. 1972). This marriage was considered the most successful of all their children and is one reason that Lo and Yul lha thar maintained a good relationship.

FIG 29. Locals celebrate elders on their eightieth or ninetieth birthday, though very few live that long. According to the local calendar, Lo was ninety in 2018. Lo did not celebrate his eightieth birthday and did not want a celebration for his ninetieth birthday. Nevertheless, locals came and gave cash gifts, which he planned to use to invite monks to chant for his family and tribe.



Lo's younger daughter, Kun thar skyid (Klu thar rgyal's mother) visited on her father's ninetieth birthday at one-forty AM on the first day of the first lunar month. She was the earliest guest during the New Year of 2018. Lo happily got up, dressed in new clothes, and came to chat with her (Tsha nag Community, 16 June 2017, Dpal rgyal).

FIG 30. Rgya mtsho (left) and Lcags mo byams (right) pose for their first picture together. When Lcags mo byams was fifteen (1955), she was forced to marry Rgya mtsho, who was ten years older. Over time, the couple became true companions. She is now eighty, and her husband is ninety. They chat, go on pilgrimages together, and are considered a model couple. When I interviewed Lcags mo byams, Rgya mtsho helped by reminding her of many things (Tsha nag Community, 19 February 2018, Dpal rgyal).

FIG 31. Lo (left) is expected to attend ceremonies held by his neighbors because he is an eloquent orator and one of the oldest community elders. This photograph is from the wedding of one of Lo's great-granddaughters. The groom and his escorts arrived at around six AM. The wedding was special because Lo participated and talked with the groom's elders (Tsha nag Community, 20 February 2018, Dpal rgyal).



FIG 32. Two local women chat (Tsha nag Community, 28 June 2017, Dpal rgyal).



FIG 33. Lo lived with his youngest son, Gnam lha mkhar, and daughter-in-law (Rdo rje sgrol ma) in 2019. Locally, the youngest son customarily stays at his parents' home with his wife. Gnam lha mkhar had a daughter and two sons and, in this photo, he holds his granddaughter, Klu mo sgrol ma (b. 2015), while Rdo rje sgrol ma prepares dinner (Tsha nag Community, 10 January 2017, Klu thar rgyal).

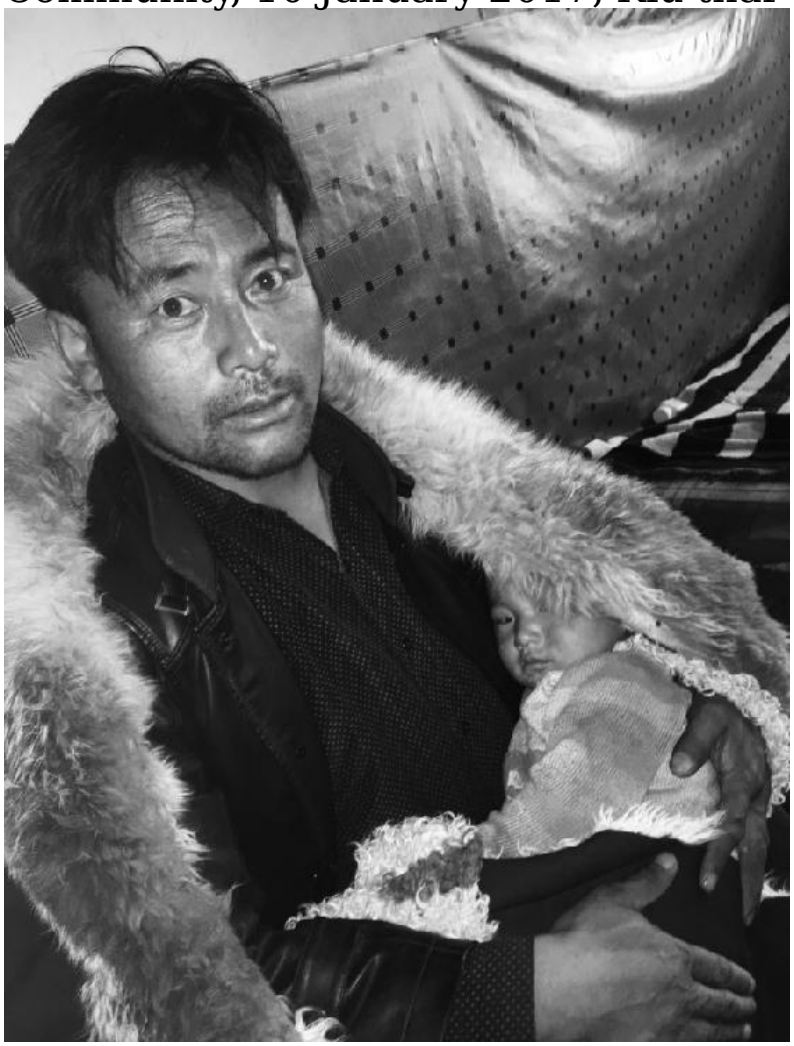


FIG 34. My family invited Lo and Yul lha thar to my home during Lo sar in 2017. They stayed for two days. My paternal grandfather (right), Father (Rdo rje; not visible), and I (left) listen to Lo's narratives about his life experiences (Tsha nag Community, 1 February 2017, Lha mo mtsho).



FIG 35. Lo drove his family's sheep to the winter pasture in the morning as usual. I accompanied him. This picture is from our walk back to Lo's house (Tsha nag Community, 20 February 2018, Dpal rgyal).



PART ONE
LO

1
MY BIRTH, NAME, AND TRIBE

I was born in 1929 in the Year of the Snake. When I was a child, my parents were curious about my future, so they consulted a skillful diviner. After learning my age and my zodiac birth year, he calculated my future using the fingers of his left hand and examining his left palm. After a bit, he said with a gentle smile, "Your son will drink the milk of one hundred white yaks in his lifetime," which meant that I was going to have a long life.[34] Families had relatively few yaks. If a family's milk yak gave birth to a white or gray calf, they kept it, believing it was auspicious. You couldn't drink milk from a white or gray yak every year because yaks give birth every other year. It required many years for a person to drink the milk of one hundred white or gray yaks.

My parents were pleased and gave the diviner more coins than usual. My parents and camp members called me Bu lo. A few years ago, there were some other elders here who were also named Bu lo. I haven't been called Bu lo since those other elders with the same name passed away. Everyone now calls me "A pa lo[35] 'Father Lo'" to respect the families of the deceased.[36]

I was born in the Rdor jag Tribe leader's home in the Tsha nag Community. Elders explained my tribe's name in this way:

Long ago, there was a great man called Rdo rje thar, who migrated from another place and settled here after marrying a local girl. His descendants were called Rdor, so people started calling them Rdor jag,[37] since they often went out on bandit raids.

The local official[38] chose my father (Rig 'dzin) to be the leader of my tribe. My family was the richest in my tribe. When officers came to collect taxes, my family had to collect taxes from all the tribe members and hand them in by a certain time. The official only cared about the total amount.

If tribesmen were unable to pay, my family had to make up the difference.

2
BANDITRY

The Thang ta and Rdor jag tribes were famous for their raids and often camped together. At that time, men were bandits not because they were poor, but to bolster their reputation, prove their bravery, receive more recognition from their home community, and share resources with their own camp. Every man in these two tribes went on bandit raids. You needed a good rifle and a good horse to go on bandit raids. Otherwise, your elders and peers wouldn't take you with them. If you really wanted to be a bandit and asked older bandits to take you with them, they tested to see if you were trustworthy. After accepting you, they trained you.

Men from our tribe set off on bandit raids after making a huge incense offering to the deities. On bandit raids, as the youngest of the bandit group, you had to learn the process of offering tea and food to your elders. During the noon break, the elders helped you find three hearthstones and other youngsters fetched water or collected dry yak dung. You were then responsible for making a fire and boiling tea. While you were heating the tea, none of the bandit group members spoke. Instead, they chanted and prayed to the mountain deities.

Fig 36. Bandits have tea at noon.



When the tea was about to boil, the youngest member put a piece of butter into the pot and then poured a little of the tea around the three hearthstones three times in a clockwise direction as an offering to the mountain deities. Meanwhile, the bandit group members took off their hats and prayed to the mountain deities. Then the youngest member poured tea to each member of the bandit group in their bowl. If you made mistakes during this process, the elders refused to eat and beat you or did not take you with them the next time. Mistakes were bad luck and weakened the group.

You couldn't joke, tease each other, or laugh. Most of the time, you didn't talk on the journey to a raid. Everyone wore a serious expression and quietly chanted on horseback. You didn't talk, even during meals. It was inauspicious if you broke this silence by talking or laughing.

The return back home was very different. You could do whatever you wanted. You could sing loudly and tease others. Most bandits returned with something. They were considered victors, and there were no limits on their behavior.

We didn't go out to rob every night. Instead, we often went out from the twenty-second of each lunar month to the tenth of the following month. That was a golden time for bandits because it was too dark to see much at night.

Experienced bandits went hundreds of kilometers away with reliable partners and returned home with what they had stolen - yaks, horses, and flocks of sheep. More timid bandits stole a single yak from a nearby community, drove it home, slaughtered it immediately, and skinned it. They didn't want the owner to find it if they came looking for their lost livestock. Elders and women admired and enjoyed telling entertaining stories about those who returned with many stolen things. They also liked to talk about those who came back empty-handed. There was always a party when someone returned with booty. The more livestock you brought back, the bigger your reputation. Every man had passionately wanted to be a great bandit from the time he was a child.

Why were those from Chos tsha Community called Sgam bzhon tshang 'Box Riders'? Bandits from our community are responsible for this humorous name. Our bandits frequently stole things from Chos tsha, whose residents then slept on their storage boxes to protect their property. Afterward, they were called "Chos tsha box riders."

Rta ra was another neighboring community. Herdsmen from this community burned the surface of the wool of all their lambs while they were alive, to prevent our bandits from stealing, killing, and skinning their lambs. No matter whether it was daytime or nighttime, bandits from our tribe snatched lambs while they were on horseback, and put them into their robe pouch. At that time, fresh lambskins were selling for a high price, and bandits could buy good quality wheat liquor by selling lambskins.

Za 'jab 'stole things while people were eating', was common when I was very young. Klu rgya told me one of his experiences:

One of my friends and I were wandering atop some mountains one afternoon. We were very tired from traveling all day. In the late afternoon, we saw a family busily skinning a sheep at the foot of a mountain and decided to have some fun. We waited on the mountain and relaxed until the evening. Eventually, after the men drove their sheep back home, and the women had finished milking, the family members went inside their black yak-hair tent. It was exactly the moment my friend and I were waiting for. Having

devised a perfect plan, we moved toward the tent. The closer we got to the tent, the stronger the aroma of boiling mutton became. The family members were ready to enjoy their fresh mutton as my friend, and I entered the black yak-hair tent quietly through the back. The family's two watchdogs were lying in front of the tent, waiting for food, just like the family members. A sheep's carcass hung from a tent pillar as sausages boiled in the pot on the adobe stove.

My friend and I hid behind the storage boxes and leather sacks in the back of the tent. When the family members were just about to eat, I suddenly ran toward the tent entrance and pulled the tail of a dog. Everyone then shouted and chased me as the other dogs started barking. My friend then put all the meat and boiled sausages in a sheepskin, leaving not a single piece of meat, including the carcass, behind.

3
DIVINATION, *GNYAN*, AND TANTRIC PRACTITIONERS

DIVINATION

Spirit mediums were admired in the case of bandit raid planning because they could divine for themselves and set off on the auspicious day they had selected. On the day of a raid, a spirit medium got up early, offered more incense than usual, invoked his mountain deity's name, and started trembling while divining. He then answered his own question about which direction he should go and set off according to his divination.

Divination using a burned sheep's *sog pa* 'shoulder blade' was also common. My relative, Tshe rgya, was very good at it. Some tribesmen asked him to divine before going on bandit raids. Tshe rgya then lit a pile of dry yak dung. When the fire was red and strong, he took out a fresh shoulder blade and placed it in the fire. As it was burning, he began chanting, summoning his mountain deity to whom he reported the situation, and asked for an accurate direction. Tshe rgya kept the shoulder bone on the fire until it cracked, carefully inspected both sides, and then indicated the direction according to the cracks in the shoulder blade.

Although men never asked women to divine, women from our tribe divined in their own home, but never in front of outsiders. They practiced it secretly. Women divined for their absent husband to see if he was safe and if he would return soon. My second wife did such divination.

Local women divined in two ways: *byis mo* and *bya pho drug mo drug* 'six male birds, six female birds'. *Byis mo* was made from wheat dough mixed with water, fashioned in the shape of a bird, and then put in the ash of a yak dung fire. The bird-bread was the size of a sparrow. The woman diviner prayed to her mountain deity and chanted while putting the dough in the ash. When the bird-bread was about ready, the diviner dug it out of the ash and examined the cracks. When cracks ran from the bottom to the ear, it meant that her husband had received the message that she had sent through the bird-bread, indicating that he was safe, regardless of where he was.

As the woman was divining, her children surrounded her, eager for good news. When they found cracks to the ear of the bird, they happily examined it again and again, and shouted, "Father is returning!" They kept it for a while and then competed to eat the auspicious bread bird.

When the line of cracks didn't connect to the ear of the bird, they believed the message was still on the way. The wife then made another bread bird a day or so later. If the cracks still didn't lead to the ear of the bird, the mother tried until cracks did appear, leading to the ear of the bread bird.

Another divination involved three sheep dung pellets. Each pellet was cut into two pieces, creating six pieces known as *bya pho drug mo drug*. One side of each dung piece was considered male and the other side, female. While most women divined using six pieces of sheep dung pellets, a few used twelve pellets or two pellets. A woman put the pieces of pellets into her left hand after shaking them in her right hand. She repeated this process three times. While doing this, she prayed to her mountain deity and chanted. She made a final interpretation according to the orientation of the pieces of sheep dung in her left palm.

GNYAN

Our home community was raided only a few times. We had many famous spirit mediums, and there were tantric practitioners in nearby communities. Outsiders thought *gnyan*[39] protected us and outside bandits believed that they would suffer if they offended us. Consequently, outsiders dared not come to our home on bandit raids.

From the time I was a child, I was told never to rob in a place of *gnyan*. I heard many related stories. Here is one story I heard from elders:

A greatly respected couple lived in the Ser rgya Area. The husband was a tantric practitioner and famous for his *gnyan* power. "Display your *gnyan*. Didn't you say you have powerful *gnyan*? You don't have *gnyan*, do you?" his wife said again and again.

The tantric practitioner said nothing.

One morning a few days later, his wife found a huge wolf lying on their courtyard threshold and then rushed to her husband for help.

"Didn't you want to see my *gnyan*?" the tantric practitioner replied with a smile.

Neighbors came to his home once they heard about the wolf, thinking their tantric practitioner was in danger, but let the wolf go after they understood what had happened.

I didn't believe any of this until my father told me about his experience. He was disabled and walked with a walking stick. Father told me this story after I insisted on learning how he became disabled:

One day, I went out with some friends on horseback. I was the only one with a rifle. Guns were rare at that time. We reached a big empty ravine after traveling for days. We saw some women with tens of yaks collecting yak dung and packing it on the back of the yaks. We all yelled, and our eyes shone with excitement as we rushed forward. Some women escaped while others ran to the yaks to drive them away. We tried to drive all the yaks away from those women. However, one woman stood in front of us, ignoring her safety. Those yaks seemed more important to her than her own life. One of my friends threw a stone with all his strength at her. It struck her nose. She silently opened her mouth, turned in circles, lost consciousness, and fell.

Later, as we were driving the yaks toward our home, a single horseman came after us from behind the mountain to retrieve the stolen yaks. My friends urged me to shoot him, so I dismounted several times to take aim and shoot. Meanwhile, my friends continued to drive the stolen yaks away. The single horseman abruptly dismounted when he realized that his horse's hind legs had been shot.

Afterward, one of the stolen yaks was too exhausted to move. I beat it with my sword and accidentally cut off its tail, so we left it behind. We soon encountered several tantric practitioners as we crossed the mountains with the stolen yaks. They had huge masses of braided hair wrapped around their heads and wore clothes blackened by their body oil. They seemed to realize we were from Tsha nag and mumbled, as though scolding us while watching us as we drove the yaks away. They didn't try to stop us.

Some years later, at the age of twenty-five, I gradually lost feeling in my left leg and could only walk with a walking stick.

My friend who threw a stone at the woman got a disease of his nose, which eventually rotted off. We all believed that these things had happened because those tantric practitioners had cursed us.

Tshe rgya had a similar experience when he was a young man. He married twice but never had a child. He adopted Lha rgod thar, one of my sons.

One night, he went on a bandit raid to Ser rgya with a friend. They entered a family's yak *lhas ra* 'enclosure' and tried to drive off some yaks quietly. A stone rolled down to the tent from under the yaks' feet as they were driving the yaks to the center of the mountain. A woman then suddenly said in a very high, clear voice "Look! Bandits are driving our yaks away!"

Surprisingly, no one came out of the tent. Tshe rgya and his friend looked back anxiously as they sped up with the yaks and then heard someone beating a drum inside the tent. Tshe rgya fell and couldn't move. His friend left the yaks behind and carried him. Later the drum fell silent, and Tshe rgya recovered. This is an example of tantric practitioner magic - *rgyud 'ching* 'legs trap' - which is also a type of *gnyan*.

4
BARE FEET, CLOTHING, AND ORNAMENTS

CLOTHING

It was rare to see anyone wearing shoes or trousers, except horsemen who were going on bandit raids, or who were on a long journey. In winter, people wore sheepskin trousers and leather boots. During the other seasons, we didn't wear shoes and trousers in daily life, especially children who were playing or tending calves, young adults who were herding, women doing such chores as churning milk and collecting livestock dung for fuel, and older adults chanting or doing prostrations. It was common for bare feet to be injured by *spen ma* 'tamarisk' and sharp rocks. My feet were injured, and l lost toenails countless times.

A boy saw Ma Bufang's soldiers wearing trousers and then asked his mother, "A ma 'Mother', we are so rich, so why don't I have trousers?"

Farmers were also barefoot. When I went to Khri ka County Town Wall[40] for trade, I saw people barefoot even while they were doing farm work.

People were commonly barefoot at weddings, including those wearing silver ornaments and good quality robes. Barefoot singers performed love songs before an audience. One of the bride's escorts once teased locals with, "Your community has a great reputation, and the local girls' amazing bare feet make me believe it!"

I once went with some friends to the Khri ka County Town Wall to trade. One of my friends wearing a pair of shoes given by a Chinese trader friend removed his shoes and put them into his robe pouch as we walked along a rocky path.

Another companion said, *"Khyod dmar dgo rgyo rin chen lus mi dmar ra, ba glang gi ko dmar ni 'u red* 'You value dry cow hide more than your flesh?'"[41] and we all burst into laughter.

ORNAMENTS

Women hung *dmar gdan* 'cloth with attached shell-shaped silver ornaments' on the back of their robes and did not remove it unless they became a widow. They hung it in front of their right shoulder while fetching water in a milk churn on their back. Some *dmar gdan* were very heavy, but it was the custom to wear such ornamentation in daily life. Women wore it even while fleeing their home area to Bcud par rdza rgan Mountain on foot or horses in 1958.

A few men wore a silver *ga'u* 'an ornament with an amulet'.[42] When I was a child, Father gave one to me as a reward for my skill in herding. I wore it around my neck and hung it in front of my chest. It was decorated with coral and was as big as my chest. I wore it until 1958 when I left it inside my family's tent while fleeing with my family.

5
Ma Bufang's Officials Collect Taxes

I herded hundreds of sheep while my peers herded only a few calves. I did what Father ordered. I drove the sheep out to graze in the early morning, and I drove them back home in the evening. I stayed with the livestock all day and never ate lunch, following the example of other herders. I was considered a great herdsboy. I also was the most beloved by my parents and my uncle while my little brother was very young. As I matured and could do more things for my parents, they were very pleased.

One morning, our watchdog aggressively barked as I was about to leave to herd livestock after breakfast. As Mother went out to check, I thought, "Strange! We don't usually have visitors so early in the morning!"

"Look! Here they are again!" Mother said worriedly.

"Didn't Ma's officers come for taxes a few months ago?" I asked angrily, putting my bowl of hot milk tea down near the stove.

"They won't come without a purpose!" Father said, struggling to stand up with his walking stick. I ran outside to greet our guests and to hold our watchdog. My parents followed. Little Brother held the long right sleeve of Mother's robe. They were behind Father and Uncle. The cavalrymen frightened them and for a good reason. These officials shot dogs and beat locals with horsewhips if they thought greetings lacked enthusiasm. No one dared oppose Ma's officers' official representatives.

Those cavalrymen with guns and swords came to my home and forced us to collect taxes from our little Rdor jag Tribe. As the family of the tribal leader, we had to collect taxes from tribal members. I don't recall them doing anything for us except collecting taxes from us. We had to pay taxes on *mdzo*,[43] horses, yaks, sheep, livestock skin, leather, wool, lambskin, and the cash we had on hand. Every year, we had to shear the sheep, pack the wool on

yaks, and transport it to the Khri ka County Town Wall where Ma's office was located.

"Hello, old friend! I don't remember your dog ever making me unhappy," said one soldier, speaking excellent Tibetan.

Uncle stepped forward quickly, held their horses' reins, and replied quietly to show respect.

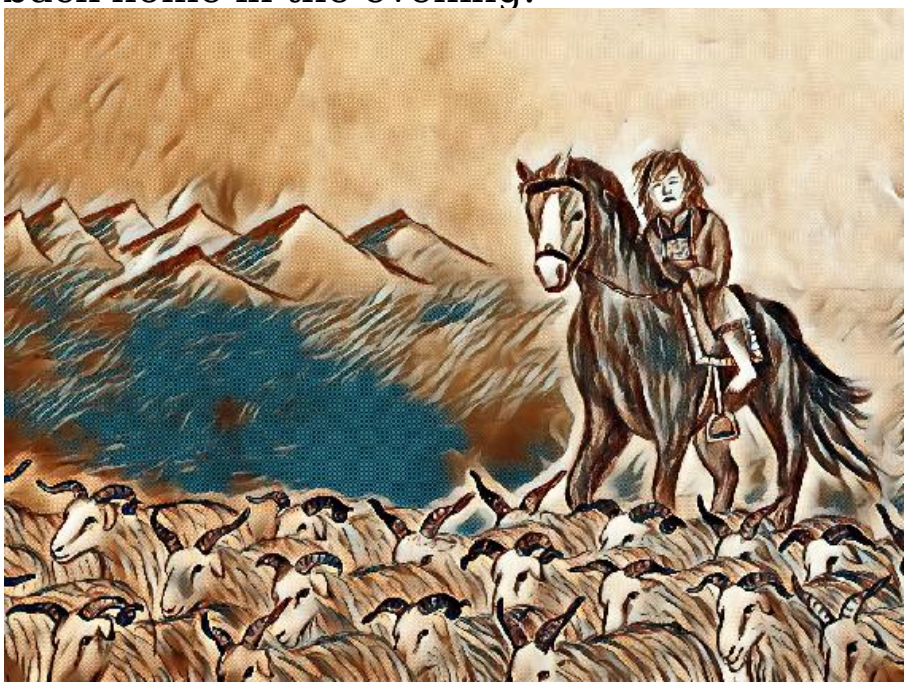
I was told to bring all the sheep near our tent. Uncle soon appeared with a leather strap and selected one good sheep for fresh meat. It was the only acceptable way we had to greet Ma's officials when they came. We called it *lug bsad rta chas* 'slaughter sheep for special guests and offer barley to their horses'. We had to provide a pot, bowls, and fuel. They personally cleaned the pot and bowls. Because of our different religions, they wouldn't let us touch those things while they were cooking. Some went to a stream near my home to clean the pot and bowls we provided, while others cut off the sheep's head and skinned it.

They stayed at our tent until they finished collecting taxes from our tribe. They slept on the right part of the tent, which was normally the men's place. Meanwhile, we had to sleep on the left side of the tent, which was normally the women's place. We provided another fat sheep whenever they finished the mutton. Most people from my tribe were unable to provide all the required taxes because they were too poor, so my family had to give what they didn't pay.

Blo bzang was from my tribe. He left his home and wandered here and there. He later settled in Stong che, near the Khri ka County Town Wall, and was accused of stealing. Government officers went to his original home in the Rdor jag Tribe to collect taxes, so my family had no choice and also had to pay taxes for him.

Sometimes we met a Ma official, Stag lha, who came collecting taxes. He was very kind to my family. He didn't help us much, but neither was he cruel. He was the son of my father's friend in Stong che. His parents had wanted my family to adopt him when he was a four-year-old child because of his parents' other children had all died from illness. My parents took him in, and he stayed until he turned ten. He was the only one who survived. He later worked for Ma.

FIG 37. I herded hundreds of sheep while my peers herded only a few calves. I did what Father ordered. I drove the sheep out to graze in the early morning and drove them back home in the evening.



6
LOCAL HEROES

STOD PA AND HIS BROTHERS

When I was a child, I enjoyed listening to stories more than other children. Gradually, I preferred listening to elders describing the bravery of previous generations or other tribal men, and how they had behaved in threatening situations. Elders also talked about tantric practitioners' abilities and how they controlled the weather and cursed other communities, causing famine. They spent less time talking about our own tribesmen's achievements, such as spirit mediums' abilities, because everyone was familiar with these accounts. They energetically told great men's stories even though they had never met some of these men. When they were narrating stories, they gestured vividly, as if they were the one who had experienced what they were describing. This drew my attention so completely that I forgot to return home and sometimes, forgot to tend my family's livestock.

Stod pa was an old, highly respected man from the Thang ta Tribe with a very messy single braid hanging from the back of his head. That's all I remember about his appearance. He was very impressive because he had been a hero when he was young. I heard many stories about him and his brothers from elders.

Stod pa had three brothers. His father was a well-known spirit medium that everyone knew, but no one remembered his real name. People called him Thang ta Lha pa. He first married a girl of the Hor gur mgon Family in the Hor Area. Later, he moved to the Tsha nag Community with Hor gur mgon Family's black yak-hair tent. After he died, his own *sngas mgo bla ma*[44] commented, "*Thang ta lha pa ni bdud bya nag gshog ring gi skye mtha' red, kho byang phyogs sham b+ha lar phebs 'dug* 'Thang ta Lha pa was the last incarnation of Bya nag gshog ring Deity, and he has gone to northern Sham bha la'."

Stod pa and his three siblings were compared to the four main poles of the sky. There was a saying, *Lha pa'i bu bzhi, gnam gyi ka bzhi* 'the four sons of Thang ta Lha pa, the four poles of the sky'.[45] They protected their tribe and nearby tribes from outsiders. Locals respected them as much as their parents and *bla ma.*

CONFLICT WITH SO NAG COMMUNITY

Conflicts often occurred between So nag Community and our community. Thang ta and Rdor jag tribesmen were mainly involved. One time, some men from our tribe were on a bandit raid and killed many children in the So nag Community. So nag men came to take revenge, killed a man from our tribe, and drove away a herd of horses. Father said they drove away all of our family's horses.

Rdi lo, Tshe ring, and several other of our tribesmen, plus Stod pa, Sher b+hu, and A rda from the Thang ta Tribe, set out on horseback with rifles to take revenge after offering a huge incense early one morning.

They rode to the winter pasture in So nag Community and drove away a herd of horses near a camp. Locals pursued them. That day, the famous seven brothers were at home in So nag. Those brothers had a special name: Seng stag phrug bdun, 'Seven Lion-Tiger Sons'. When they also pursued the bandits, So nag local women said, "Seven Lion-Tiger Sons went to bring back our horses today. How pitiful those bandit raiders are! They will soon die!"

However, because nearly all the horses had been driven away by the bandits, only two of the Seven Lion-Tiger Sons were on horseback pursuing the bandits. As the Stod pa group drove the horses away, they had to cross frozen springs in the lower part of ravines, which slowed them down. It took time to force the horses across the ice. Whenever a horse that Stod pa's group rode tired and slowed, they immediately changed it for a horse from the herd of stolen horses. Rdi lo and Tshe ring were responsible for catching a horse among the stolen horses when it was required. These two strong men could catch a horse with less effort and time and held it tightly with their hands until they could put a halter on it.

The distance between the Stod pa group and the two pursuing So nag horse riders grew less and less. Gunshots rang out. After crossing several frozen springs, the two horsemen caught up with them. As they tried to cross a frozen spring, a man from the Stod pa group was shot. The bullet went through his chest, and he slumped across his horse's neck. Sher b+hu pulled him back up until he was able to hold his reins tightly and could gallop along with the others.

Meanwhile, Sher b+hu moved around the herd of stolen horses, chanting and praying loudly while others only thought about themselves. Another young man was shot and fell off his horse. Some thought he was dead, but then he called out, "Sher b+hu, take me with you!"

"Boy, I'm not a man if I leave you!" Sher b+hu shouted, dismounted, and told others to drive his horse with the stolen horses. 'Bu kha from the Rdor jag Tribe, also dismounted and stayed with Sher b+hu and the wounded man. No others dismounted and stayed with them. Sher b+hu and 'Bu kha lay down with the young man and aimed at the two horsemen, who were fast approaching. When 'Bu kha was ready to shoot, Sher b+hu stopped him with, "Let's shoot when they get closer."

As the two horsemen got nearer, 'Bu kha's anxiety increased. Sher b+hu cautioned, "Wait, wait." Suddenly a gunshot rang out and then another echoing from ravine to ravine. To their surprise, the two So nag horsemen tumbled from their horses.

"Brother! Will that do?" Sher b+hu's brother, Stod pa, yelled from the upper ravine.

He was standing with another man, A rda, with a rifle. Sher b+hu then realized that his brother had not ridden away with the others. Sher b+hu and other men went to check the two So nag horsemen. One was alive. They decided to take him with them. He seemed to get better after they got him to Stod pa's home and treated his wounds. Although Stod pa's wife didn't like guests, Stod pa's group members had to leave for their own homes early that night. The next morning, they learned that the man had died.

If an enemy was captured and injured and you wanted him to survive, he required constant care and should never be left alone, or he might die from something minor.

Consequently, local elders complained that the men shouldn't have left the injured man.

Later, locals talked about this bandit adventure. Sher b+hu and Stod pa gained more respect, especially Stod pa who had killed two of the famous Seven Lion-Tiger Sons, and who had not left his brother behind. However, A rda complained, "I was the one who killed the other guy, but Stod pa took all the glory!"

Locals laughed when they heard this.

Stod pa's family had gone on pilgrimage to Lha sa when Stod pa was very young. They drove pack yaks that walked so much that their hooves wore out and bled. They wrapped the hooves in dried skins, which lasted for a while but immediately broke when they got wet. However, they reached Lha sa by replacing the broken skins when needed.

They didn't drive livestock for food but instead, hunted along the way. They brought home the skull of a deer with antlers that some locals believed the family had killed, something considered to be wrong. Nevertheless, acquiring a deer skull and antlers was considered an omen of great good fortune and many locals admired it.[46] Indeed, Stod pa and his sons' families were considered wealthy until 1958.

When Stod pa's family members reached Lha sa, they had no food, but good fortune came to them once they camped. Locals went from pilgrim camp to pilgrim camp looking for needles to exchange for food, coins, and so on. Stod pa and his group had needles for sewing clothes, but not for trade, and regretted not bringing more needles with them. However, they didn't need to suffer from running out of food because, like Lha sa locals, they could easily exchange the needles they had brought with them for food.

• • •

One day Lcags lo and some other Thang ta Tribesmen drove away a herd of horses in the Nyin mtha' Area on a bandit raid. The horses' owners followed the bandits to the Thang ta Tribe camps and attacked, leaving three people dead, including two of Stod pa's brothers.

For several nights, Sher b+hu and Stod pa went to avenge their dead brothers but didn't find the killer. One night, they went to the murderer's family and found an old monk sleeping under the light of a butter lamp with the family members, but they didn't see the killer. Sher b+hu

left a bullet at the tent entrance to show that they had been there for the killer.

Sher b+hu and Stod pa hid in a small valley near the killer's family tent until daybreak, at which time they saw a neighbor come and count the sheep of the killer's family. Sher b+hu aimed at this man, but he kept moving among the sheep as he counted. Sher b+hu finally fired, and the man fell.

Later, the Thang ta Tribe and the men agreed to negotiate and invited arbitrators. Sher b+hu stipulated that the Nyin mtha' people must bring the blood of the man whom he had shot in the early morning and swear that the blood was from the injured Nyin mtha' man. The Nyin mtha' people eventually brought blood from the injured man in a bowl, and Sher b+hu drank it, which calmed his desire to avenge his dead brothers and cured his deep pain.

Later, Sher b+hu disappeared for a couple of days. Locals found him in the ravine of a sky burial site with his dead brothers, whose skulls were in his robe pouch. He was mad.

After years of meditation, Sher b+hu recovered, behaved normally, and practiced meditation in daily life. He was known as *mtshams pa* 'Meditator'. People called him Thang ta mtshams pa when they told his stories.

Ku mur's Death and Revenge

One day, I saw a group discussing how to deal with the death of Ku mur, who was the son of Mgon rgya, Thang ta Lha pa's grandson. A boy, Lo rgya, angrily jumped on a horse and shouted that he couldn't agree to negotiation and that he wanted to go to the Lha sde Area to avenge his older cousin, Ku mur. He was sixteen and Stod pa's son. I was about eleven at that time.

Later, I heard O rgyam describing his last adventure with Ku mur:

One morning, we noticed that some of our yaks were missing. Ku mur, Sha bo, and I tracked them to a valley near the Lha sde Area. When we got near, we saw some men sleeping near the yaks. Our arrival woke them, and we fought with swords. Ku mur's left arm was injured. When

these men escaped on horseback, Ku mur yelled, "Shoot that man's horse! He injured my arm!"

Sha bo lay down, took aim, and fired with his rifle, but none of the horses or men fell. He shot two more times, but the horsemen still galloped away. I was about to shout and chase the thieves, but Ku mur, who was also lying down, grabbed me with his right hand. I fell. He put his rifle on his broken arm, aimed, pressed me down with his right leg to stop me from chasing the thieves, and fired his rifle. A man and his mount rolled over a second later. Then the man jumped up, leaped on one of his friend's horses, and escaped, but we got our yaks back.

As soon as Ku mur's arm recovered, we decided to take revenge. Early one morning, we set out on horseback for the Lha sde Area. When we got there, we saw two local men driving some yaks away. The younger one had a rifle. It seemed they had stolen those yaks. Ku mur said that he was going to approach the two men and pretend to be looking for his lost livestock. He told us to move on separately, but come near him when he caught up with the two men. We then pretended to look for tracks, while Ku mur approached the two local men. Holding his rifle, the younger one yelled, "Hey, don't come near us!"

As Ku mur walked toward them, he said quietly, "Young man, calm down! I'm just tracking my lost livestock."

Holding his rifle tightly, the younger one aimed at Ku mur, and warned him again. Ku mur didn't stop. When Ku mur grasped the muzzle of the young man's rifle, the young man fired and Ku mur fell. We all shouted and ran at them. Before the young man could reload, I grabbed him and threw him to the ground. He let go of the rifle and fled. Sha bo and the older man were fighting, and Ku mur lay on the ground.

I pursued the young man who was running down into a valley. I stopped in the upper valley as the young man ran up the other side of the valley, aimed, and fired.[47] He died.

When I returned, I saw Sha bo had killed the older man with his sword.

Ku mur died that day, but his friends had avenged him. O rgyam became well known afterward. I have heard stories of avenging Ku mur since childhood.

Some years after the Ma government collapsed, Leader Xu, the representative of the new government of China (PRC), gathered local men and held a feast in Rta ra, a nearby community. Leader Xu designated some local men as the new tribal leaders. The celebrations went on for days. Some new government soldiers conducted military training for locals. Young local men wrestled with the soldiers. Only O rgyam could defeat the soldiers. He wrestled them, one by one, and threw each of them to the ground.

• • •

"*Phyi hri sde*'*i* '*brong r*wa'*i gur sha za dgos, Nang phu nu*'*i la bzhag rul ba mi za* 'I'm going out to get high-quality wild yak meat from other communities rather than eating leftovers from my community brothers',"[48] Ngag dbang declared, announcing his intention to go on a bandit raid. With some young men of his camp, who called him A pha 'father', they set off for Sa g.yon 'bri zab mo'i nags, which is now known as Btsan mo'i nags 'Ferocious Forest' in Reb gong. The forest is so dense that if someone enters, it is hard to track them. One day, when Ngag dbang and his men were in the forest in the late afternoon, Ngag dbang decided to spend the night there. Just before sunset, they noticed smoke rising below and near them. Ngag dbang and his men were curious, so two young men were sent to check. While tracking the smoke, they climbed atop a cliff and realized the smoke was coming from the bottom of the cliff where an older man and two younger men were sitting around a hearth made from three stones. A pot of water was heating. Three rifles leaned against the cliff near them. As Ngag dbang's men observed the three men, the water boiled. One man said to the older one, "A pha, the water is boiling. What should we cook for dinner?"

"Don't worry, we'll find something in this forest," replied the older man.

Suddenly three *de pho* 'pheasants' appeared across a nearby stream. The older man said, "Our dinner is that," pointing to the three birds, and picked up a rifle. The two young men also picked up their rifles.

"I'll shoot the upper one, you shoot the next one, and you're responsible for the third one. Shoot the heads, or you'll ruin the meat," the old man ordered. They aimed, and

when the three rifles fired, the heads of the three birds exploded. Meanwhile, Ngag dbang's two young men aimed their rifles at the three men. One of Ngag dbang's men murmured, "Let's kill them and get their rifles. They've got excellent rifles!"

"We can't do that. We need permission from A pha (Ngag dbang)," the other man replied.

"We're here on a bandit raid! Let's kill them and get their rifles!"

"We can't kill anyone without asking A pha."

Eventually, they returned to Ngag dbang and reported, "The two young men call the old man "A pha". It seems he's their father. When three pheasants appeared, they shot their heads off with their rifles. Let's go kill them!"

"I don't think we can or should kill them. Let's go to their *ba kha*,"[49] said Ngag dbang.

"You two put your rifles on your back, and I'll put my rifle on my shoulder,"[50] added Ngag dbang.

They started for the *ba kha*. When they got near, the three men grabbed their rifles from the cliff where they were leaning. The older man asked, "What do you want? Who are you?"

Ngag dbang approached directly, sat near the hearth, and said, "We have no purpose. You don't need to be afraid. Please sit!"

The older man sat.

"What are you doing? Where are you headed?" asked Ngag dbang.

"We're wanderers. We are *ru shor ba.*[51] And you?" the older man replied.

"We are not *ru shor ba.* We're from the Tsha nag Community leader's family in the Sma gzhi area. Why are you roaming? " asked Ngag dbang.

"We are from the Nyi ma dgu shar Family in the Dgu rung mthil area," said the older man and continued, "The head of Dgu rung mthil killed my wife, so we killed him in revenge and fled."

They continued chatting, calmed down, and all sat around the hearth and enjoyed a meal together.

"I'm the head of Tsha nag Community. What if you become my men?" Ngag dbang asked after a while.

"We have no place to go, so it would be great to follow a lord. We will serve you as our leader," declared the older man.

The next morning, Ngag dbang said to his men, "We got those three men so tomorrow, we'll set out for home! None of you are allowed to aim your rifles at even a rabbit or a marmot!"[52]

Ngag dbang's two men dared not question the reason for keeping the three men from Dgu rung mthil, but they were puzzled and murmured to each other, "Why does A pha want these men. They've got very good rifles so why not just kill them and keep their rifles?"

Ngag dbang took the men to his camp in Tsha nag and pitched a new tent for them. After some years, the two younger men were given brides from Ngag dbang's camp, which explains how three men from the Dgu rung mthil area settled in Ngag dbang's camp. If outsiders invaded and drove away tribe livestock, the three men pursued them with their good rifles and retrieved the livestock from the robbers. Ngag dbang also sent the three men on bandit raids, and they returned with horses, yaks, or sheep. Gradually, the Tsha nag leader's family became richer and acquired more power.

Before Ngag dbang met the men from Dgu rung mthil, his family was well-known as *g.yag rgan rngo lo tshang* 'a family with unhealthy yaks'. At that time, Tsha nag leader's family had only a gray *g.yag rgan rngo lo/rngo ro*.[53] Such a family didn't have meat to eat. To *rlung kha gcog*,[54] they took blood from near the tail of this particular gray yak. The blood dropped into a pot until the bottom was covered, a little fat was added, and it was cooked and eaten, reducing the desire to eat meat and the feeling of dizziness that came from not eating meat. When Ngag dbang's mother asked the daughter-in-law to *g.yos* 'cook' the blood with a little fat, she refused with, "*Gson po ri la 'gro ru bcug, gson khrag yul nas g.yo ba ngas mi shes*, 'I didn't learn how to cook warm blood at home while livestock were alive on the mountains'. *Ngu zo der sha ra rtsed gi, ngu zo der skyug ra log gi*[55] 'I feel afraid of and disgusted by it!'"

Ngag dbang's mother tried to cook the blood with fat, said, "It's cooked!" and then added, "it's not cooked enough!"

Šhe said this repeatedly, so finally, the daughter-in-law couldn't bear it, and blurted, "Keep stirring! It's cooked when it turns black!"

"Interesting! It seems your family also took blood from living livestock to cook!" Ngag dbang's mother laughed upon discovering her daughter-in-law's family was also impoverished.

Later, as the Tsha nag leader family's economic condition improved, they decided to go on pilgrimage to Lha sa and set off with relatives *rta gyo khya sngo khya zhon nas, mdzo ka khya rgya khya ded nas, dngul sgor ta len nang la blugs nas*, 'rode horses with white spots that had both black and white hair and white-spotted gray horses; and drove horned *mdzo* with big white spots on its forehead and white-spotted, dark-brown horned *mdzo* carrying packs of silver coins'.[56]

When they reached the Nag chu area, a permit was required. They became sworn friends with the Nag chu leader, Grags pa rgyal mtshan, and were able to get a white piece of paper, with writing in black ink and a gold stamp by Grags pa rgyal mtshan. This special permit made things easier, for example, they could easily worship the tA la'i bla ma and paN chen bla ma, and the two Jo bo in Lha sa. As long as they had the permit, no one dared attack. When they reached Lha sa, they wrote the names of all the deceased members of the Tsha nag Community and also the unhealthy gray yak, which was greatly appreciated by the Tsha nag leader's family. They prayed for a good next life for all the deceased community members and the gray yak.

The pilgrims returned home very safely.

7
MARMOTS AND PIKAS

MARMOTS

Some older children hunted marmots. Herdsmen often brought salt, rather than bringing lunch. Most herdsmen killed and roasted marmots where they caught them.

Sometimes, herdsmen brought small pieces of cooked marmot meat back to their family, but most of the time, they gobbled the marmot up immediately after roasting it. Marmot meat was very oily, and one marmot could feed four or five people.

To catch marmots, herdsmen collected dry yak dung to burn at the entrance of a burrow they had seen a marmot enter, forcing thick smoke into the burrow. They hoped that the marmot would run out. Sometimes this worked, and the marmot rushed out to escape the smoke. Most of the time, however, herdsmen dug into the marmot burrow with a shovel.[57]

Children were told never to catch marmots because if we did, something terrible would happen. Younger herdsmen ignored this. As soon as they heard marmots barking on the mountain, they completely forgot their elders' warnings.

One day, I was herding my family's sheep on the mountains of our summer pasture and saw two young herdsmen digging into a burrow they had seen a marmot enter. One young man asked me to get his sheep that had almost crossed to the other side of the mountain and drive them back if I wanted to have a taste of marmot meat. Of course, I rushed to bring back his sheep and found them skinning the now dead marmot.

The other young herdsman asked me to collect some dried yak dung for fuel to roast the marmot. When I returned with a pile of dried yak dung, they sent me to their sheep again to ensure they didn't mingle with other sheep. Meanwhile, I checked my sheep flock. By the time I returned, they had finished cooking the marmot. When the

younger man offered me a piece of meat, the older man suddenly asked, "Have you eaten marmot before?"

"Never! It's my first time," I answered eagerly.

"Really? In that case, I'm afraid you shouldn't eat it. You'll be sick after eating it the first time, and we don't want to be responsible," he declared and took the piece of meat back from me.

"I didn't know that! You'd better not eat it!" echoed the younger man.

I was so disappointed! And I was exhausted from all that running. I hated them!

• • •

One afternoon when we were pitching my family's tent on our autumn pasture, I heard some neighbor elders scolding someone. I didn't pay much attention. I thought they were quarreling about someone not herding the livestock very well. We had just moved with our livestock from our summer pasture. I was busy holding a pole inside the tent as Father ordered, while my parents and Uncle drove pegs around the tent. Later, when we were moving our belongings into the tent from outside where we had unloaded them from our yaks, I realized that nearby kids had made a circle and were looking at a dead marmot with a bloody wound on its head. It had died from being hit by something heavy.

"Who killed it? Where was it killed?" I asked 'Jam dpal.

"Younger Uncle killed it on his way here. He was responsible for driving the yaks today," he replied a bit proudly.

"So, is he going to cook it?" I asked.

"That's what Younger Uncle was planning, but Grandfather got angry when he learned what he had done. I think they'll feed it to the dog," 'Jam dpal said with an upset expression.

"Is it tasty? What it's like?" I asked.

"It's very tasty. I know because Younger Uncle once brought a piece of marmot meat home," 'Jam dpal explained.

Mother called me, so I went back to help her and reported what I had seen. My parents chanted *ma Ni* after my report.

Later that evening, I saw the dead marmot surrounded by some young men and kids. I rushed over. A young man

was carefully skinning it from its bottom to its head and turned the skin inside out as he worked. It was my first time to see a marmot skinned. It was different than skinning a yak or sheep. We were told to collect dry yak dung for fuel and some clean stones as big as our hand if we wanted to have a morsel of cooked marmot. Kids rushed in every direction, searching for dried yak dung and stones.

I left with 'Jam dpal and asked him if his younger uncle had gotten permission from his grandfather.

He answered, "Not in the beginning, but Grandfather finally relented after I pestered him to let Younger Uncle cook marmot for me."

We quickly ran back to the marmot after collecting dry yak dung in our lower robe flap. The guts and head had already been removed, and 'Jam dpal's younger uncle was cutting the marmot carcass into pieces. Other young men started making a circle with dung, making it as tall as my knees. They left a big opening where the wind could blow in. It was similar to a small circular wall. I wanted to touch it, but we were ordered not to because it might collapse. They set the middle of the circle on fire. As the wind blew through the opening, the smoke became thicker and soon became a strong flame.

Next, they put some of the stones we had collected into the fire. When the stones were very hot, they started putting pieces of meat and hot stones through the lower end of the skin. The upper end of the skin was tied shut. As hot stones went into the skin with a sizzling sound, a delicious aroma filled the air. My mouth watered. I guessed it was the same for the other kids. We children made a circle and quietly watched. They quickly tied the lower end of the skin shut after they had put meat, hot stones, and salt inside. When they put it over the fire, the hair on the skin burned and turned black. More delicious aromas wafted about as 'Jam dpal's younger uncle removed the black ash of the burned hair with a knife. It seemed the meat was now cooked.

It was almost sunset, but neighboring children still stood there, waiting for the cooking to finish. 'Jam dpal's younger uncle soon announced, "It's cooked. Let's cut up the meat."

When he cut it in the middle, I saw boiling oil. It was the fattest meat I had ever seen. He removed the stones

and gave each of us a small piece of meat. 'Jam dpal got a bigger piece. It was my, and the other children's first time to eat marmot, so we were given only a little piece to prevent us from becoming sick. It was quite delicious! They said I would miss it soon if I ate it more than twice. 'Jam dpal's younger uncle cut up the rest of the meat and told us to take some to each of our families. Meanwhile, he and other young men took turns sipping the hot oil. I took a piece to my family. Mother did not eat any, but Father and Uncle had a taste.

•••

The next year in the summer pasture, I saw a marmot burrow near my tent. Some young marmots came out almost every day. Recalling how 'Jam dpal's uncle had killed a marmot, and how it had been cooked, I thought, "Why don't I do that!"

It was a sunny day. The baby marmots came out as usual. They were fat and cute. I tried to get near them, but they ran back to their hole and entered one by one. I realized how hard it was to catch one. I was afraid my parents would see me, so I dared not dig into the hole or force smoke into the hole. As I went back toward my family tent, I saw the marmots emerge from their burrow again. I had a sudden idea and turned back and found a flat stone big enough to block the marmot hole. I stood silently behind the hole, trying not to breathe. Maybe I stood there for fifteen minutes, or maybe longer. Then one baby marmot's head appeared from the hole, and then after a while, another one… They came out one by one. There were four of them, and they started searching for grass to eat.

Were they too hungry to notice my existence, or maybe they thought I was a corpse? I then jumped down to the burrow entrance shouting like a demon. Before I could block the entrance hole with the flat stone, two marmots slipped inside. The third one was caught between my stone and the hole entrance, while the last one remained outside. I held the third one's tail and pulled it, but it slipped through my hand. The last marmot was running in all directions. It ran back towards the hole after deciding there were no other holes to enter. I took another stone in both hands, lifted it above my head, and threw it at the marmot's head. It fell, yowling, but soon got up. Bleeding, it tried to find the hole. I hit it again, and it fell again, panting with

wet eyes. I pulled it by its tail to a boulder and beat its neck with a rock until its neck was almost cut off. I was exhausted.

When I was about to call my neighbor playmates to come and cook it together, Mother saw the dead marmot and scolded me. She warned me that I couldn't go home until I removed the dead marmot and hid it. I picked up the dead marmot and hid it where others wouldn't find it.

I lied to my parents and Uncle and told them that it was already dead when I found it. I thought they would beat me to death if I told them the truth.

I woke up early the next morning, still thinking about the marmot I had killed, and how to cook it with my playmates. Then I felt there was something on my neck - something as big as my thumb. I discovered that there were big boils on the back of my neck. I had never seen such big boils on anyone before. I felt anxious. I was afraid this was the result of what I had done the day before. I remembered elders saying that nothing good came from harming marmots. Most people considered them to be meditators and never harmed them. I tried my best to hide the boils on my neck, regretting what I had done. I swore I would never do it again. I passed the marmot hole again as I was driving sheep from the mountains that afternoon. I saw the stone used to block the marmot hole had been moved. I didn't know if someone from our camp or the marmots had done it. Afterward, I never saw a marmot near that hole again.

• • •

I heard many stories about marmots from elders. As winter came, marmots block their burrow entrance by themselves. Neither people nor their predators can locate their holes after they block them. They don't eat grass outside again until late the next spring. The *mo wong* is a big open area at the end of each marmot's hole where they stay together during the winter. They imitate meditators, sitting in a circle on their hind legs with their palms together, and their heads just above their palms. They sit very near each other to maintain their body temperature. A white marmot sits in the center. On snowy winter days, the snow melts above the *mo wong* because of the marmots' warmth underground.

Some young herdsmen noticed what resembled sheep dung inside the marmot guts while butchering marmots in spring, because the marmots stopped eating in winter, so

their guts were empty and had shrunken. They didn't eat grass when they first came out in spring. Instead, they swallowed sheep dung to enlarge their intestines. They did this until they were able to eat grass.

Herdsmen reported seeing marmots with a lot of belly-fat even in spring. It seemed they didn't lose much weight over winter, though they ate nothing.

Some herdsmen were skilled at finding the *mo wong* during the commune period[58] and survived on marmot flesh.

After wandering for many years, Tshe lo eventually settled in Stong che after marrying a local woman. He became a leader during the commune period. His favorite meat was marmot. He hunted marmots in his free time and brought back the ones he killed to share with other leaders. His special skill was digging into their burrows. Tshe lo located the marmots' *mo wong*, dug straight down just above the *mo wong*, and killed all the marmots inside by throwing sharp stones at their heads. As his desire for marmot meat increased, he started looking for more *mo wong*. However, one day he fell into a hole he had dug when it collapsed. He was trapped there for a while. Yul lha thar, who was Tshe lo's relative and had taken care of him after his rescue, told me he had heard the sounds of broken bits of bones moving inside Tshe lo's head while he was holding it.

PIKAS

There were few pikas where we lived. Locals considered them to be auspicious. No one liked to see anyone harming pikas. However, children liked to catch and play with them while they were herding calves. Me too. We chased pikas until they disappeared into their holes. Then one of my calf-herding mates would stick his hand into a hole while another herding mate or I blew into another hole. The one with his hand in a hole would get a pika. Sometimes, I was the one with my hand in a hole. A pika would run to my hand and touch my palm with its nose. When I felt something wet and cold touch my palm, I closed my hand, trapping its head, and then pulled it out. We knew that

pikas would urinate if you held them for very long. The smell of pika urine is terrible. We didn't know if it was due to fright, or in self-defense.[59]

After my peers caught pikas, they pretended they were their livestock and led them to graze. My parents told us never to kill pikas or to bring them home, dead or alive because, if they died, the pika's mother would take the dead pika to the child's tent, and curse the entire family. I believed my parents' warning.

The pikas' main predator is the *sre mong* 'weasel'. Every child wanted to catch one, but no one dared try. We were told never to catch a weasel. It never opened its mouth after it bit someone, unless you killed it. You would then lose the flesh where the weasel had bitten you.

8
GUILT OR INNOCENCE? HOT OIL, A RED-HOT AX, *RTSAM PA* BALLS, AND YUL LHA DEITY

HOT OIL

One day while herding sheep on top of a mountain, I saw many people gathering at our camp near my family's tent. I thought something had happened involving my family members because such crowds were rare. I asked one of my herding mates to tend my sheep while I galloped home on my horse. I dismounted when I got near the crowd. There were even more people than earlier.

There was absolute silence. My parents, Uncle, and some unfamiliar men, most of whom were elders, were also there. All of our camp's men were there, too. I was so curious that I didn't tie my horse. I joined Father and the other men. Father seemed worried, and Uncle wore an unusual expression. No one spoke to me, though they all saw me. I dared not disturb this silence by asking questions. All I could do was wait. Then I saw some men from our camp busy heating something in a black pot on a hearth. Mother sat next to it with the neighboring women. I had no idea what was going on. Suddenly someone said, "It's almost boiling! Do you want to come and check?"

All the men went to the stove except for Uncle and three other men. I went to the stove with the crowd and was surprised to see rapeseed oil bubbling in the pot. Someone put a straw in the oil, and it immediately turned black. I understood. They were doing *sher*. I had never seen this before, though I had heard about it from elders.

"Are you guys ready?" one elder said, turning to Uncle and three other men.

"What? Is Uncle going to do *sher*?" I wondered.

The crowd made way for Uncle and the three men who moved in a line towards the pot of bubbling oil. Uncle was

second in line. He and the other three men seemed very confident.

The crowd started praying and beseeching their mountain deities. Uncle also prayed under his breath. The first man put his finger in the oil, was given a white cloth to wrap the finger in, and then went to my family's tent. Uncle was next and did the same. All four men did the same thing. No one else followed them. Everyone was very interested and seemed willing to wait for the results. My parents were especially anxious. The elders entered the tent. Everyone else stood silently outside. Finally, the elders came out from the tent and announced that all of the tested men were *bkar* 'pure'. The hot oil had not burned their fingers. Each man then received fifteen sheep in recognition of their innocence.

Later, Mother explained that the strangers had accused Uncle and the three neighbors of stealing horses, which they had found near our camp. After a long debate, they had demanded *sher* as a way of proving their innocence

RED HOT AXES

One day, while I was herding my family's sheep, I saw a group passing through a ravine with a few yaks and some sheep. Some of the group were from our tribe. They stopped in the lower part of the ravine where I was, tied the yaks together, and kept the sheep around them. Some men began making a fire. I watched while tending my sheep.

I guessed they were doing *sher*, but I didn't understand why they had chosen a place in the ravine to do it. I walked down to them after I was sure my family's sheep were far from the other sheep.

Elders from our tribe and some outsiders were busy blowing the fire with bellows and heating an ax. A young man kept the sheep near them. Tshe phyug and G.yang rgyal were sitting quietly. They were the only people not doing anything. Their mouths were constantly moving. It seemed they were chanting. They were told to be ready after the ax turned red in the fire, and elders offered incense on a flat stone near them. They then placed the red-hot ax on two stones before Tshe phyug and G.yang rgyal,

who stood up. The sound of people chanting and praying grew louder. Tshe phyug ran by, grabbed the red-hot ax in his right hand, and threw it after taking three steps. He was then given a white cloth to wrap his hand. G.yang rgyal did the same. Neither released the red-hot ax until they had tossed it away.

I heard that once a red-hot ax slipped from Ku mur's hand during *sher*, but he picked it up from the ground and threw it anyway.

After a while, elders from both sides agreed that Tshe phyug and G.yang rgyal's hands had not been burned, which meant that they were pure and innocent. Tshe phyug and G.yang rgyal were given the yaks and sheep the accusers had brought as compensation for the false accusation.

Three days later, the outsiders came again and checked Tshe phyug and G.yang rgyal's hands. They left after seeing no sign of burns.

I learned the outsiders had chosen the ravine because it was not visible from the local holy mountain, Bsang ri. The outsiders didn't want Bsang ri Deity to help Tshe phyug and G.yang rgyal.

At that time, only a few families, such as Stod pa's family, had such an ax in local camps. The family took very good care of the ax, not allowing anyone to touch it except on the day of the ritual to keep the ax's power. The family kept the ax in a felt bag and stored it with other religious implements in a designated wooden box. If someone held such rituals, they chose the ax they felt was best for seeking truth and justice.

• • •

In another incident, a local man and woman went to work for a rich family in a different community. Eventually, there was conflict because half of the money they had earned was lost. They suspected one another. Local elders held a small *sher* after both the man and woman agreed. Local elders hung an image of Yul lha Deity in front of them, wrote the man and woman's names on two small pieces of paper, and put each paper in separate, small balls of *rtsam pa*. The elders placed the *rtsam pa* balls on a plate, and then put the plate in front of the Yul lha Deity image after shaking

the plate several times while praying for justice. The person whose name was inside the ball that rolled toward the image was considered pure and innocent. The person whose name was inside the ball that rolled in the opposite direction was considered guilty.[60]

If a thief stole something from you and you had no idea who the thief was, there were several ways to accuse someone. In the *lha la gtugs pa* 'accuse to the deity' ritual in the agricultural area of Stong che, a family who had lost something invited the small statue of Yul lha Deity and carried it in a sedan-chair from its temple at the bottom of Stong che Valley. A spirit medium was important for the ritual. Once the spirit medium was possessed and began trembling, it was time to say what the family wanted. The sedan chair carrying the Yul lha Deity statue started moving forward, suddenly became heavier,[61] and required four strong men to carry it. It moved until it stopped in front of the gate of the thief's home.

9

FLEEING MA BUFANG'S TAXES IN 1944 AND SICK LIVESTOCK

CONFLICT AND NEGOTIATION WITH MA

When men from the Rdor jag Tribe had conflict with Ma's soldiers, several men from each side were killed, including four of Ma's soldiers in the Tsha nag area. The leader of the Tsha nag Community, Dpal ldan, claimed, "Men from our community killed Ma's men. Their corpses are scattered here and there. There is nowhere to escape. We should do something!"

Some families suggested fleeing, but Dpal ldan disagreed, saying there was no place to go because Ma controlled the north, south, east, and west.

"We shouldn't just leave the corpses. They are human corpses, not dog corpses. *Myi myi bdag lag la 'jog mi thub na ra, ro ro bdag lag la 'jog dgo ni red*[62] 'We can't return the living men to their masters, but we should return the corpses to their masters'!" Dpal ldan said.

Other locals completely disagreed. They were sure Ma Bufang would behead them. At this time, some men volunteered to go and offer their heads, but Dpal ldan said, "*Khyos myi dbab yang mi chod, ro dbab yang mi chod* ''You are an incapable person and barely have the value of a corpse'."[63]

Dpal ldan decided to personally meet Ma Bufang, despite the six tribes of the Tsha nag Community's disapproval.

"None of you need to go. I'll be the only one who goes there," Dpal ldan said.

A loyal elder, Yar 'phel, from the same camp, insisted on accompanying Dpal ldan.

"My head is worth more than yours, so let me go alone!" Dpal ldan said.

At last, the Tsha nag leader agreed to meet Ma Bufang in Khri ka with Yar 'phel. They were prepared to lose their heads.

When they were passing through Grwa tshang near the hot springs,[64] locals came to see the Tsha nag leader and his loyal follower who were going to meet Ma Bufang with the corpses of Ma's soldiers on the back of mules.[65] Later, locals gossiped that the Tsha nag leader was energetic, while the older man was skinny, seemed to be dying, and probably wouldn't make it to Khri ka County Town where Ma Bufang was.

Dpal ldan and his companion reached Khri ka County Town. Bangban's[66] quarters, the Ya men,[67] were located inside the town wall. As they got to the gate of the wall, soldiers grew alert, pointed their rifles at the two men, and demanded to know their purpose. Dpal ldan replied, "I'm the head of Tsha nag. We've come to return corpses."

After a while, Bangban came with armed soldiers, detained them, and took the corpses. The soldiers took them directly to Ma Bufang, who was in the Ya men. It was the first time for Dpal ldan and his servant to see Ma Bufang, who was surrounded by armed soldiers. Ma resembled Gshin rje chos rgyal 'the King of Death', who judges the dead in the afterlife.

They knelt in front of Ma Bufang. Dpal ldan said, "I'm the leader of Tsha nag. This is my man. Men from my community accidentally killed some of your soldiers. It's our fault. Please forgive us. I failed to return your men alive, but I now return the corpses to their master, you. Please cut off our heads. We came to offer our heads."

Ma Bufang listened, laughed loudly, and said, "Tsha nag leader! It's not a problem to cut off your heads, and you are just a leader with a low position. But you will be tortured before I cut off your head!"

"Sure, we're ready for that, but after our heads are cut off, please don't do anything to members of our Tsha nag home community," Dpal ldan said.

"I don't care much about that, but we will surely cut off your heads," Ma said.

"Please do whatever you like, but please think wisely before you cut off our heads."

"Why should I care much about that? I've beheaded many people," said Ma.

"You need to think carefully. The leader of the Bla brang area, Bla dpon a blo, is my community's sworn friend, and the leader of the Nag chu area, Grags pa rgyal mtshan, is also my community's close sworn friend. Both will get involved if you cut off my head," Dpal ldan said.

Ma Bufang suddenly changed his mind and said, "Haha! I don't need your heads. I can't eat them nor wear them, but I need *mda' mo stong gis bshag dgos*."[68]

Dpal ldan was very pleased hearing this and began flattering Ma, "You are a leader of profound wisdom. According to our Tibetan custom, *shi bo 'gro byed cig phar la ster dgos, gson po 'dug byed cig shul tu bskyur dgos* 'some property needs to be offered for chanting for the deceased to leave peacefully, and some property needs to be kept so the compensator can live'. You understand this custom! We understand you are a great leader and we'll never resist you again!"

After agring on a date to provide the property Ma Bufang had demanded, the Tsha nag leader and Yar 'phel were released, and their horses were returned. When the Tsha nag leader and Yar 'phel reached Chos gru in the Tsha nag Community, Tsha nag Community members had gathered and were offering a huge amount of incense and praying to the mountain deities as invited spirit medium and monks chanted. When locals noticed their leader's return on horseback, they were so excited that some local men and women wept in joy.

FLEEING WITH A GROUP OF FAMILIES

When locals killed some of Ma's soldiers, I was sixteen years old (~1945). Some locals did not agree to pay half of their property as compensation, including my father. We were faced with two choices - stay or escape. We had heard that Bla brang Territory was a big grassland without taxes under the jurisdiction of Bla dpon a blo. A total of seventeen families including eight from Co ser Community, another

eight from the Rung chung Tribe in our community, and my family, secretly agreed to move rather than pay taxes to Ma.

We started from our summer pasture, which was about seventy kilometers from Khri ka County Town. We were in no hurry. Our relatives and neighbors had promised to keep our secret for as long as they could. We packed our belongings on yaks. I carried Father's rifle and drove my family's livestock. Some of us rode horses. Others rode yaks. At that time, my family owned about 350 sheep and more than thirty yaks. Sometimes we camped for a couple of days where there was lots of grass. Most nights, my family pitched only half of our yak-hair tent. This allowed us to be more mobile. Sometimes we moved at night and rested during the day. On the way we met other families who were also migrating to Bla brang and, after understanding each other's intentions, we became one group.

We were twenty-five families when we reached the Mgon shul Area, located at the boundary of Ma's area of control and Bla brang Territory. People from Mgon shul herded livestock on the grassland and had the authority to prevent anyone escaping with livestock from either side. Officials provided them with good quality rifles, so it was hard to pass through their place. Everyone wanted to take this shortcut, but it was dangerous. Eventually, we decided to take our chances and try to cross at midnight. We kept as quiet as possible. It was a very dark night. Heavy rain fell. We thought we had passed very successfully, but the next morning, we realized that we had lost about 700 sheep. One family had lost all their sheep.

We became a strong, united group on our way to Bla brang, and especially after we settled there. We no longer felt like refugees, and no one dared offend us.

We reached the Bsang khog grassland after about two months. The day after our arrival, some of our elders went to meet Bla dpon a blo, the Lord of Bla brang Territory, with some uncooked whole sheep carcasses and *dngul sgor* 'silver coins' as gifts. They returned with the news that we could live there as long as we wanted without paying taxes. The Bsang khog grassland was boundless, and there were countless springs. We and our livestock forgot our tiredness and homeland for a while. However, there were only a few

mountains between Mgon shul and the place where we had camped in Bsang khog.

I saw Bla dpon a blo only once. It was in the second year when we visited Bla brang Monastery on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. There were pilgrims from throughout Bla brang Territory there. The chieftain of this territory, A pha a blo, appeared from the second floor of the main temple of Bla brang Monastery. He was with his two wives, and his daughter and her husband, who was one of Bang a ma's (female chieftain) sons from the Sog po Territory. They were enjoying the '*cham* 'religious dancing', performed by monks. Many pilgrims were sitting around the '*cham* performance area. I had not seen the chieftain of the Bla brang Territory before this time. He wasn't as big and strong as I had imagined. Still, there was something about him that made him look like a real chieftain. He sometimes talked to his son-in-law, who wore a blue, army uniform. The monks came to the middle of the crowd and left after they had finished performing '*cham*, and then the next group of monks came and performed '*cham*. The crowd enjoyed the '*cham* while frequently looking at their chieftain.

CONFLICTS WITH MGON SHUL COMMUNITY

One very dark night, some herdsmen from Mgon shul pretended to drive a few sheep back home and mixed their sheep with ours. When we asked them to remove their sheep from ours the next morning, they insisted they had to go home before morning. A big argument ensued.

The next morning, finding that we had lost about 600 sheep, we realized they had planned everything and had tricked us. While we were arguing with some of their men, and therefore distracted, others had stolen our sheep. We were annoyed. Some of our men jumped on their horses with their rifles and were ready to retrieve our stolen sheep. Others agreed to stay behind to protect our camp, the women, children, and the older people; and tend our livestock. We then did as our elders suggested. We burned a pile of incense behind our tents and circumambulated it three times. Women kept butter lamps burning inside the

tents while elders kept the incense fire smoldering outside and praying that all of us would return safely.

After crossing the mountains, we reached Mgon shul and came upon about twenty horses and a horse herder. We beat the herder very badly and said that we would return if they didn't return our livestock the next day. We kept the twenty horses as a ransom and returned to our camp. One day passed, two days, ten days... We saw none of their people, nor did we see our stolen livestock.

Hundreds of our livestock died because they could not adapt to the new environment. A few people believed that those twenty horses brought us bad luck. Only a few people wanted our stolen livestock back. Everyone was soon very concerned about our bad situation and was eager for solutions. As the number of our dying livestock constantly increased, we almost forgot about the stolen livestock.

REUNION WITH THANG TA TRIBE FAMILIES FROM THE HOMELAND

After about three months, we moved to A mchog 'bo ra and found about twenty families of the Thang ta Tribe from our community who had also fled after hearing of our move. We knew each other very well, so my family joined their camp. We felt more at home, safer, and more comfortable staying with families from the same home community.

At that time, our former camp of about twenty-five families that had formed a group when my family escaped to Bla brang decided to go to Rgan gya. Those twenty families of the Thang ta Tribe also had made things worse. When they had crossed several mountains after leaving our homeland, they had encountered about twenty Ma soldiers who had just finished collecting taxes and were returning with a carriage full of silver coins. The Thang ta Tribesmen kidnapped the soldiers and took the silver coins and the soldiers' guns. It was only when they were near the Bla brang Territory that they released the soldiers.

As they fled to Bla brang Territory those twenty Thang ta Tribe families had to pass through Mgon shul. As they were about to enter Mgon shul, they merged all their livestock. Mounted men were holding rifles and guarded on

both sides. Mgon shul residents then attacked. Thang ta tribesmen defended their people and livestock.

Meanwhile, Thang ta tribeswomen fastened the end of their *dmar gdan* around their waist with their sash, so they could move more quickly and hurriedly drove the livestock while praying and chanting loudly. As they ran among the livestock, they marked the livestock they could catch to *tshe thar la btang* 'free them'.[69]

Eventually, Thang ta Tribe families passed through Mgon shul. During the fighting, hundreds of livestock died, and one person was injured. They camped on the Bsang khog grassland the following day. After pitching their tents, the men went back to Mgon shul to take revenge. They killed three people and returned to their camp with tens of horses in the late afternoon. They left that night and rode to A mchog 'bo ra. Conflict with Mgon shul continued until we left.

CONTAGIOUS LIVESTOCK DISEASE

After about a half-year, terrible, unexpected things happened. Almost all our livestock got a contagious disease and died.

When we were at home, we invited local monks to chant for the sick livestock, but there were no monks in our camp, so we just watched our livestock die rather than invite monks to that unfamiliar place.

We tried to prevent all the yaks from getting sick by doing *rtsi blugs*. Only certain people could do this. We slaughtered the sick yak, chopped the flesh into small pieces, and then mixed this with blood and unclean material from the intestines. We then poured this from a bowl into the mouth of the healthy yaks, but it didn't help much.

10
RETURN HOME FROM BLA BRANG TERRITORY IN 1947

In the third year, Zi ling kru'u zhi[70] sent us a letter stating that they wanted us to return and that we would not have to pay taxes. We all agreed to return after hearing this good news.

At this time, my family had only about one hundred sheep and a few yaks and horses. Our other livestock had died. After a lengthy discussion, my family exchanged our remaining sheep for a good quality rifle from a Chinese trader. Most families followed suit and traded the rest of their sheep for rifles. Consequently, we lost all our sheep in A mchog 'bo ra. In the end, my family had nothing but five yaks, two horses, and a good rifle.

We dared not pass through Mgon shul again, so the only way to go home was around Mgon shul. Eventually, Rnga ba blo bzang helped us get passports from Zhis tshang dpon po 'Lord of Zhis tshang', Mdzod dge dpon po 'Lord of Mdzod dge', and Sog po rgyal mo bang a ma 'Female Chieftain of Sog po'. Rnga ba blo bzang helped us because of his friendship with some of his sworn brothers in our camp. Rnga ba blo bzang had an important position in Bla brang Territory. Our passports meant no one could harm us on our way home, no matter what we had done to anyone before.

We headed for our homeland after Lo sar 'Tibetan New Year'. It was our third Lo sar celebration since we had left our homeland.

Lo sar

We often did *dud pa gtags* 'cleaned the inside of our tent completely' on the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth lunar month. After putting a leather sack over their heads to prevent dust from going into their eyes, people removed the dust from inside the tent with a *rnga phyags* 'yak-tail whisk'. We did it once a year. Women made *go re dmar bo*

'fried bread' and *rgyal bo* 'bread for New Year gifts'. *Go re dmar bo* was fried in rapeseed oil mixed with a little sheep fat. We made red bread this way, and everyone enjoyed it.

Rgyal bo in various shapes and sizes was baked in ash. People made it only for New Year gifts. Some men herded their livestock while others went to buy liquor. On the first day of the New Year, our camp members visited older adults, offered *rgyal bo* as gifts, and received their blessing.

On our last Lo sar in Bla brang, men from our camp agreed to hold Lo sar together. Our camp was at the foot of a mountain chain with our tents pitched in a circle. A few days before Lo sar, our camp divided into upper and lower camps. My family was in the upper camp. Women from our camp built a big, square wall of frozen yak dung that was about one meter tall in the center of the upper camp. Women from the lower camp did the same at the center of the lower camp. The two square walls faced one another. They made a big, adobe stove at the center of each square wall. Some upper camp women sent children to watch how the lower camp women were constructing their yak dung wall and stove. The children soon ran back and reported that the lower camp was decorating their stove with a *dpal be'u* 'endless knot'[71] on each side of the stove. Women from our upper camp then decided to decorate their stove with a *dung dkar g.yas 'khyil* 'right-turning white conch' on both right and left sides of the stove. They mixed earth with wet yak dung to make the stove. Their hands were red from the cold, but they happily finished it. We called it *lo ra*. Women liked to compare to see which camp's *lo ra* was more attractive.

Each family from our upper camp provided what we could for our *lo ra*, which we would share during Lo sar. Some wealthy families provided a yak leg. Middle-level families provided a sheep leg. Poor families provided small pieces of meat or only a small amount of wheat flour. There were no requirements on what to provide. People provided as much as they could.

Meat prepared in autumn for the winter was called *dgun sha*. We didn't slaughter livestock when Lo sar was approaching.

Women made *go re dmar bo*, which involved frying dough in rapeseed oil and sheep fat, while others made

dumplings steamed in steamer trays. Teenage girls fetched water in wooden milk churns on their backs, while children brought dry yak dung to the *lo ra* for fuel. Adult men readied highland barley wine. Elders advised on how to do everything well. Meanwhile, young men herded livestock on nearby mountains.

Early on Lo sar Eve, we selected the two biggest pots and cooked meat in them on our new *lo ra* stove. Men took turns using goatskin bellows to make the fire stronger and hotter. All our upper camp members gathered at our *lo ra* after we drove the livestock back. Men sat to the right of the *lo ra* from eldest to youngest. Meat and fried bread were put in front of the men. Women sat to the left of the *lo ra* after they offered men hot milk tea, hot yak meat, and mutton taken from the pot. Food was in front of both women and men. The *lo ra* was as warm as our black yak-hair tent because the yak dung wall blocked the wind, no matter how strong it was. We enjoyed this abundance of food.

Good singers started singing to the elders, describing how auspicious the time was, how lucky people were, and how fat the livestock were. We soon heard songs from the lower camp, and we also saw flames from their *lo ra* stove.

Most elders went to bed early. Only a few remained when we started singing love songs. My parents and Uncle didn't go to bed until midnight. They listened to the love songs we young people sang. We young people sang to each other until dawn.

The following day, everyone from our upper camp went on Lo sar visits together to the lower camp's *lo ra*, which was as warm as ours. Everybody from the lower camp came out of the *lo ra* to greet us. All our camp men and women sat in their *lo ra* as special guests. They offered us their best food, which tasted different from ours, boiled meat, steamed dumplings, and fried bread. They gave us their best welcome, and we ate as much as we could. They insisted that we eat more, cut meat into pieces, and handed it to us. When we said we had had enough, they insisted and almost put pieces into our mouths. We spent the whole day teasing and singing to each other. All the men got drunk.

The next day, the lower camp visited our *lo ra,* and we spent time together in the same way. We celebrated Lo sar

for three days. It was our happiest time in Bla brang.

RETURN HOME

On the twentieth day of the first lunar month, we set off from A mchog 'bo ra and passed Zhis tshang, Mdzod dge, and Sog po, finally reaching the Sde skor Area, which was near our home community. We felt we were back in our homeland. It was early in the fourth lunar month, and we were only thirty kilometers from our home community. We pitched our tents in the early afternoon near many other tents.

Later, people got together. Suddenly, there was a lot of noise. Not knowing what had happened, I rushed over and found Rig b+ha and Lo rgya, surrounded by a crowd. Both Rig b+ha and Lo rgya had very good rifles they had got in A mchog 'bo ra. They were now visiting local households, asking if someone wanted to buy one. Locals took away their rifles and horses immediately when they realized the two men were from Tsha nag because men from our home community had stolen their horses long ago.

Both Rig b+ha and Lo rgya returned to our camp empty-handed. Our elders didn't permit us to get the guns, but the following day, when we camped at the foot of Mdo rtse Mountain, people from my camp noisily gathered again. Some had seen Sde skor dbu mdzad 'Leader of the Sde skor Area' visiting a family with Rig b+ha's rifle. We were then told to surround a black yak-hair tent where the man had gone with Rig b+ha's rifle. We made a circle at the top of the ravine, but we didn't attack. Instead, our elders sent some *gzu ba* 'arbitrators' to retrieve the rifle. Later, I saw parts of the black yak-hair tent billowing out, and an arbitrator ran from that tent with Rig b+ha's rifle as the other arbitrators held a man who tried to pursue the running man. We were then ordered to return to our camp.

Later, I heard that the arbitrators talked to Sde skor dbu mdzad politely. When that didn't work, they held Sde skor dbu mdzad and forcefully took the rifle. We thus got one rifle back without a major battle.

That day, Lo rgya's wife, G.yang lo, gave birth to a boy, Yul lha thar (Klu thar rgyal's paternal grandfather). That night, our camp decided to move before daybreak, to avoid

attack from the Sde skor men. I saw G.yang lo walking and another woman carrying her baby.

When we returned to our homeland, I was nineteen years old. We were the poorest family there.

11
KIDNAPPED, SWORN FRIENDS, AND FARMING

KIDNAPPED AND HELD FOR RANSOM IN A TENT

The following year, we had no sheep to herd, so I was free most of the time. One day, a friend and I visited the Bon rgya Area. It took a day by horse to get there. At midnight, while we were sleeping at my friend's home, we were suddenly seized and beaten by about twenty Bon rgya men. I lost consciousness.

The following day, I found myself in shackles in a family tent. Recalling what had happened the night before, I realized I had been kidnapped. They told us we were hostages. Our home community had been ordered to pay a ransom because my home community had robbed their livestock years ago. They wanted compensation. They had demanded 300 silver coins for each of us. However, there was no response from either the community or my family.

A long time passed, and my friend was released because he wasn't from my tribe or the Thang ta Tribe.

Meanwhile, my parents got the news soon after I was caught. Unable to pay the ransom, they asked for help from our community leaders, who said there wasn't much hope, but added they were trying to find a resolution.

Two months later, there still was no response from my community.

Father wasn't the tribe leader after our return. A few people wanted to help us, but their poverty didn't allow it.

Three months later, Father and Uncle found a family who bought our new rifle for 300 silver coins. Eventually, I was released and returned home.

I was treated well during my three months of captivity and ate whatever my captors ate.

During my detention, my sworn friend, Tshe lha, from the Bon rgya Area, asked their leader if he could take me to his own home for ten days promising that he would be responsible if I escaped. I was treated like a special guest

during those ten days. There were no shackles and no guards, so I felt much better.

SWORN FRIENDS

I had about ten sworn friends in my life. We became sworn friends when we were young. We formed such relationships with whomever we thought was reliable, and when both sides were fond of each other. We said the following to each other once we both agreed, "*De ring nyi ma'i phan chad la, 'chi rag nyi ma'i tshun chad la, gcig gis gcig la phan btags nas go chod dgos. Myi ring myi rgyud!* 'From today till death, we will help each other whenever help is needed! For generations'."[72]

FARMING IN THE HERDING AREA

It was autumn when I returned home from the Bon rgya Area. Locals were harvesting their small fields. We cultivated barley for both people and livestock. After harvesting, we spread the stalks on the flat ground and used a yak for an entire day to drag a stone roller over the stalks. Eventually, we separated the grain from the stalks, stored the dry grain in leather bags, and placed it at the back of our tents.

We plowed the fields with one or two yaks for several days after we finished harvesting. You had to go back and forth with one or two yaks in the field for several days. This was difficult because it took a long time, and it bored everyone to death.

In late autumn, we made many piles of yak and sheep dung and *sa tshig* 'red ashes of burned earth'.[73] We mixed dung with these ashes and put them in piles in rows in the fields through the winter. We called this *ngo bde bzhag* or *sa tshig phyes* 'making fertilizer'. We scattered these piles over the fields in late spring when the ground warmed up. Next, we sowed barley seed and plowed it again.

People from my community kept barley grain in leather bags to make *rtsam pa* and to burn in incense offerings. We packed the rest of the barley on yaks, went to Khri ka

County Town, and traded it. It usually took a day to get there.

We exchanged barley for wheat in Stong che, where most residents were Tibetan farmers. We had the wheat milled at a watermill in the same area. We also visited friends we had made there over the years. We gave them yak butter and cheese when we visited, and they gave us fruit in return.

We went to the County Town if we needed salt, tea, barley liquor, and rapeseed oil. At that time, only a few people used cash. We took lambskins, yak skins, and leather straps to exchange for what we needed. Chinese and Muslims spoke good Tibetan in the County Town. We met people from various herding areas who had come to trade. Some had spent three or four days traveling with packed yaks to reach the County Town.

A trade route ran through my home community, and we often saw traders with packed yaks. Sometimes more than a hundred people drove hundreds of packed yaks along the trade route. They traveled in groups to prevent bandit attack.

FIG 38. We plowed the fields with two yaks for several days after we finished harvesting.



12
MOTHER'S DEATH IN 1948

Some visitors came on horseback one afternoon. Mother went out to greet them and tied their horses in front of our tent. When she escorted them into the tent, she told me that her belly was uncomfortable. I didn't pay much attention and suggested she drink some hot water. Several days after my return from Bon rgya, I continued to enjoy recounting my time there with our guests. Later, Mother's face paled, and she looked very ill. Uncle noticed her discomfort, went outside, and soon returned with Rdor jag Lha pa, who was considered the greatest local spirit medium. He entered our tent and then put on his *lha chas* 'spirit medium clothes' and *dbu zhwa* 'hat'. *Ca la nag po* 'black thread' hung from the edge of his hat, covering half of his face. He placed his *mda*' *ru* 'hand drum' in front of him after sitting on a bag that served as a seat.

Uncle went outside to burn incense according to Rdor jag Lha pa's gestures. Uncle called to Yul lha several times while offering incense and flinging sacred water into the sky. Rdor jag Lha pa started shaking, and his face became red. "Give me a sword!" he ordered while he was trembling.

Father unsheathed his sword and handed it to Rdor jag Lha pa, who put the sharp tip in his mouth, and forced it down his throat. After putting half of the sword down his throat, he pulled it out and ordered, "Bring a stone!"

He was still trembling and red in the face. Uncle handed him a stone that he had already prepared. After taking the stone from Uncle, the spirit medium put the tip of the sword to his belly, struck the handle of the sword with the stone, forcing the sword into his belly. There was a tent pole behind Rdor jag Lha pa, and we heard the sound made by the sword tip hitting the tent pole. He was soon bleeding. Rdor jag Lha pa then pulled the sword out of his belly, took the hand drum, and shook it constantly. After a while, he said, "*Nga 'jam dbyangs nag po lha la sprul yod, 'bod ba'i don shod* 'I'm possessed by the deity 'Jam dbyangs nag po. Say why you called me here'."

"Kind mountain deity, how is she? Is she ill? Do we need to worry?" Father asked, kneeling in front of Rdor jag Lha pa.

"There's no need to worry. She'll be fine!" he replied while still shaking.

We asked him to divine what we should do next. Rdor jag Lha pa took some barley from a bag, put the grain in his right hand, shook it, blew on it, and shook it again. He then placed the barley seeds on one side of the hand drum, which he held in his left hand. He examined the barley seeds on the hand drum very carefully. He next picked up the barley seeds, shook them, blew on them and again, looked closely at the barley seeds on the drum. He did this three times while chanting. Finally, he said, "There is no need to be afraid. Invite some monks and chant. Inviting a doctor would be better."

Rdor jag Lha pa left after completing the ritual.

• • •

Early the next morning, Uncle went to invite the only local doctor. Meanwhile, I went to Mchod rten Monastery to invite two monks, who returned with me. The older monk had a yellow bag on his right shoulder, and the younger monk carried a chanting drum and a drumstick on his back. They sat in the right part of the tent. Mother lay in her bed in the left part of the tent, covered with an old sheepskin she used as a quilt. The monks began making various *gtor ma* 'sacrificial objects in various shapes made of colored *rtsam pa* mixed with butter' and placed them on a box. They used straw, colorful cloth, and strings to make a small female figure about twenty centimeters tall. They asked for my family's copper bowls that we kept filled with water and offered in front of a hanging deity image in daily life. The monks filled some of the bowls with barley seed and some bowls with water.

Having soon finished all of this, they chanted for about an hour, and the older monk started beating the chanting drum that hung above him tied to the inside top of the tent, as the other monk continued chanting. The older monk picked up a *dril chung* 'bell' with his left hand and shook it while continuing to chant. I stayed with the monks. Periodically, they told me to fling sacred water to the west, outside the tent. Meanwhile, they asked Mother to get up

and sit near Father and Brother, who were both kneeling near the entrance of the tent.

I took the copper bowl of sacred water from the older monk and passed it above my family members' heads. They all bent their heads as I moved the bowl. I came out of our tent and flung the water as the older monk had directed. Later, the older monk handed me one of the small *gtor ma* on a plate and told me to take it outside and fling it as I had flung the water. I did so after I moved it above my family's member's heads. Following a short period of chanting, I flung another small *gtor ma*. I did the same with other small *gtor ma*, one by one, as the older monk ordered.

Eventually, only the small female figure in colorful cloth and the biggest, triangular shaped, red and black colored *gtor ma* remained. The red part was livestock blood mixed with melted butter. After a long period of chanting while beating the hanging drum, shaking the hand drum, and ringing the bell, the younger monk gestured for me to get ready. Brother stood. We both adjusted our robes, tightened our sashes, and put on both of our robe sleeves and hats. Brother took the *me cha* 'flint lighter' as I prepared some dry tamarisk branches and tied them together with a rope.

At sunset, Brother and I were told to leave with the female *gtor ma* figure on a box cover. I held the box cover and passed it above my parents' and brother's heads, and then came out of the tent. Brother followed with the tamarisk. We headed in a northeasterly direction and did not speak to each other, nor did we look back as the monks had instructed. We walked for about twenty minutes and reached a path. I gestured to Brother, indicating it was the right place. Brother put the tamarisk down and set it on fire. I placed the *gtor ma* from the box cover on the fire and put the female figure by the fire. We then left with the box cover. We chanted and didn't speak to each other on our return.

Mother said she felt better after the ritual. For *'bo* 'pay for chanting', we gave coins to the monks, and I escorted them back to their monastery located in the same valley as our tent. Uncle hadn't returned. My parents were worried about him.

•••

When I woke up the next morning, Uncle had not yet returned. Mother was very ill in bed. Father was sitting by

her. Her situation worsened, and she passed away. She was only forty-four years old.

Uncle returned with the doctor at around noon. He scolded himself, saying that he had been delayed and felt guilty that Mother had passed away. The doctor claimed that Mother had passed away because of *ma bzhu pa* 'indigestion'. He said that even if he had arrived before she passed away, he would not have been able to cure such illness. Uncle explained that he had found the doctor treating a patient in another community about one day away by horse. He and the doctor had set out for our home at midnight and hadn't slept or rested on the way. Anyway, Mother was gone.

Rdor jag Lha pa and the monks from the local monastery were famous for their abilities in divination and expelling evils. Sadly, neither the spirit medium nor monks had saved Mother.

My family invited seven monks to chant and pray for Mother after her death. Neighbors came and chanted at our tent for seven days and nights. We left her corpse on the mountain at a sky burial site. One vulture came near the corpse after circling it several times. Other vultures followed. The first vulture was her *bla bya* 'sacred vulture'. Everyone has a sacred vulture that leads the other vultures to the deceased. She was lucky because vultures sometimes did not come if the deceased had taken a lot of medicine or had once killed a vulture that might have been their *bla bya*.

I turned my hat inside-out and wore it that way for forty-nine days from the day Mother passed away. My other family members did the same. I did not see any of my family members wash their face or change their clothes for forty-nine days. Our relatives and people from our tribe also attached a piece of white fabric to their hats to show sympathy.

We invited monks from our local monastery and Bla ma A this from A this Monastery, to chant and pray for a good next life for Mother. We also offered butter to the local monastery to burn as lamps. We spent most of our property on the funeral. Before Bla ma A this left our tent, he told Father he wanted to take Brother with him to the monastery and promised to take good care of him.

Consequently, Brother became a monk at the age of thirteen. His monk name was Phun tshogs.

That year, my family didn't attend weddings, nor did we celebrate Lo sar. Neighbors and relatives came to visit with gifts of fried bread before Lo sar. None of our close relatives held weddings that year.

13
DATING AND REVENGE

DATING

I started night dating when I was sixteen and then spent most nights away from home. I was either on bandit raids or looking for girls. When I was looking for girls, I didn't care much about time or food. Sometimes, I set out in the morning after breakfast and didn't eat the rest of the day. I returned home the next day in the afternoon with an empty stomach. Wherever or whenever I met a girl I was attracted to, I forgot about home and followed her, trying to get her attention.

I encountered various girls during the daytime while they were herding livestock or on their way to fetch water. After I located the girl's family tent, I went there quietly at night. The girl normally slept in the left part of the tent with her sisters or mother. Her father and brothers slept on the other side. It was common for a man to have sex with his girlfriend quietly in her family's tent. If my relationship with the girl was good, we had a *chad* 'date'. When night came, she left the tent and returned to the family tent at daybreak.

Most men went night dating in the same or nearby communities because it was safer, and they didn't need to fight men from the girl's community. The farther you went for night dating, the more of a real man you were. Most men went night dating between the ages of eighteen and thirty, regardless of their marital status.

Some men in my home community liked to go on night dates with each other's wives. The husbands agreed to this before they visited each other's wives for a date. There were also men who were brothers and liked to night-date each other's wives. They had agreements such as "You go on a night-date with my wife tonight, and I will visit yours."

Forcing women was also acceptable. In the beginning, the women struggled, but soon they enjoyed it. It was not common that women got pregnant. It was difficult for some women to get pregnant. They might have adopted children

from their siblings. If a woman gave birth to twins, it was considered inauspicious.

I often saw menstrual blood on women's feet and legs. They wore no trousers under their robes. There was no way to stop or reduce the flow. They just bled when the time came.

REVENGE

One day, I was roaming about in the County Town after night dating and unexpectedly saw about ten of the men who had kidnapped me in Bon rgya two years earlier. They had pitched their tents and were trading. I noticed they had no rifles. It was a golden opportunity. Mother wouldn't have passed away so early if they hadn't kidnaped me, and I also wouldn't have lost my rifle. They had forced me into a poor life. The more I watched them, the angrier I felt.

"Hey! How are you?" I said, approaching them.

"Fine, fine," they said in surprise, recognizing me instantly. Standing up, they looked around to see who was with me. They seemed to feel much better after they realized I was alone.

"Did you come to trade?" I asked.

"Yeah, we never imagined we would meet you here!" one said.

"Yeah, me too!" I replied.

"So, did you trade? When are you returning home?" one asked.

"I'm almost finished. I'm leaving today. And you? Maybe we can go back together," I said.

"We haven't started yet. We will leave the day after tomorrow. It's a pity we can't go back together," one replied.

As soon as we said goodbye, I went straight home, got four men from my tribe, and waited for them at the foot of a mountain in Rol lce. In the early afternoon, they came in sight with their yaks loaded with goods. They stopped and soon were busily preparing to boil water for tea. Meanwhile, they released their yaks to graze. We began driving their yaks away while they were enjoying tea and some food. When they were about ready to eat, they realized that their yaks were being driven away and chased

us. We shot in their direction, so they didn't dare pursue us. We got eleven yaks that time.

14
LO'S FIRST MARRIAGE

A LOCAL YOUNG MAN'S MARRIAGE

If a man wanted to marry, it was important that he was rich or handsome, otherwise, the girl or her family rejected the proposal. Most girls focused on a man's appearance. Was he handsome? If you were not so handsome, then you needed to be rich and ask for an arranged marriage. Parents or grandparents arranged most marriages. There were only a few free choice marriages.

A handsome man, Shes rab, in my community was a monk as a teenager. Later, he became a layman and often went out for business on horseback with a rifle, though his family's condition was poor. He fell in love with Bo bza' u rgyan's daughter in the Hor Area. Bo bza' u rgyan had once owned 10,000 sheep. We heard that his family's *khrom* 'main ram' horns were covered in silver. If a family had more than 10,000 sheep, it was customary that their main rams' horns were covered with silver.

One night, Shes rab went to Bo bza' u rgyan's tent and brought his lover to his home. Before he left, he hung a *kha btags* 'white silk scarf' on her tent to indicate that she had gone to her lover's home and a negotiator would soon come.

Bo bza' u rgyan immediately rejected the marriage proposal when he understood Shes rab's family background. Shes rab's family then had to return the girl to her own home. She was upset her father hadn't approved. Later, Shes rab brought her to his home again and sent a negotiator to Bo bza' u rgyan's home. The girl also asked her father to agree, and he eventually did. She then moved from the Hor Area to her husband's tent in my home community, but a year later, she returned to her parents' home and never returned.

Her father, Bo bza' u rgyan, ordered her to return to her husband's tent, take one hundred sheep with her, and promised to support her for life. She refused and met and fell in love with Gser mo's son of the Yug ngogs Tribe in the

Hor Area. She moved to her second husband's home after they married. Gser mo's son was well-known for his good looks. When I was in the Hor Area, people talked about how handsome Yug ngogs gser mo's son was. I never saw him, but the locals' description created a very attractive image. Not long after their marriage, men from the Dmag ser Tribe in the Hor Area killed the husband. Later, the Dmag ser Tribe fled to somewhere in Si khron.[74]

MY FIRST MARRIAGE

Father arranged the first of my two marriages, to a girl from a rich family in Co ser, which was near my home community. My family held a huge wedding attended by many people.

Four or five days before my wedding, female relatives and neighbors came to my family's tent and began making *go re dmar bo*. About three days before the wedding, close relatives and friends brought about fifteen whole, uncooked sheep carcasses as wedding gifts. Neighboring women cut up and boiled them all, except for one carcass to later use in a wedding game.

It was considered one of the best weddings in my home community. My family didn't need to slaughter even one of our livestock. Normally, on the wedding day, the groom's family never slaughters livestock. Instead, relatives and close friends bring meat.

The day before the wedding, most of my family's distant relatives and friends arrived. Neighboring men came to help Father. Uncle borrowed carpets and food trays from neighbors and placed cooked mutton on the borrowed trays. We unrolled carpets in the right part of my family's black yak-hair tent and placed the trays of mutton and trays of fried bread nearby. We then needed to move all of the plates of food when we went to bed.

My family also borrowed a small, white fabric tent from the neighbors for the bride - the *bag ris* 'bridal tent'. Normally, brides had a difficult time during their wedding, because brides *kha bkug* 'only had meat soup and very little meat' for about thirty days before the wedding. The bride was expected to not go to the toilet during the wedding

festivities. No female escorts accompanied her to the groom's home, and her many clothes and adornments made it inconvenient for her to go to the toilet.

The night before the wedding, the bride's family members and neighboring women got up at around two AM, woke the bride, and told her to sit near a lamp. One of her sisters and one of her sisters-in-law sat near her with a comb decorated with tufts of white sheep wool and a basin of water mixed with milk, which was used to comb her hair. One of her brothers or male cousins dressed in a new sheepskin robe appeared with a bowl of wheat liquor decorated with the Eight Auspicious Symbols. As he started singing the hair combing song, he used his right ring finger to flick liquor into the sky from the bowl that he held in his left hand. Two women then began combing the bride's hair and plaiting it into small braids. The song often made the neighboring women, the bride's girlfriends, and especially her mother weep. They were happy their girl had found a new home but were sad that she was leaving.

After about half an hour, the song ended, and all the women came to finish the plaiting. A *ra stod* 'round silver hair ornament'[75] was put on the back of her head. She wore a sheepskin robe or *phrug* 'red cloth robe' trimmed at the bottom with otter skin and tied with a colorful sash. A *bzho bzung* 'silver ornament hung on the front of a robe tied with a sash'[76] and *glo gzur* 'silver ornament'[77] was hung on the robe. Normally, a girl wore a large *bzho bzung* or *glo gzur* on special days such as weddings or during Lo sar after she married. A *dmar gdan* hung from her back, and various, long strips of colorful cloth hung from both sides of the *dmar gdan*. Brides also wore a wedding hat, such as *tshar zhwa* 'lambskin hat', or a *wa zhwa* 'fox skin hat'.

Before daybreak, the bride's escorts clad in new robes arrived on horseback. They were all young men, except for two or three elders who were her uncles or other close relatives. As the bride was about to step out of her family tent and mount her horse with her escorts, one of her uncles stood at the doorway, called her name, and said in a high voice, "*Skyid cig yod na rang gis khyer, g.yang zhig yod na a mar zhog* 'Please take all happiness, please leave all good fortune for your mother'."

He repeated this three times, which led most to weep, especially the bride's mother, who was sometimes so overcome she fainted.

AN ELABORATE WEDDING

Most guests arrived early on my wedding day and wore neither shabby nor new clothes. All the women had plaited their hair into small, tidy braids after washing it in *phyur khu* 'liquid from boiled buttermilk'. Men rarely washed their hair. Local younger women reddened their checks with *skag*[78] and wore *dmar gdan* covered with shell-shaped silver ornaments they had borrowed from relatives before the wedding.

Early in the morning, our elders sent five horsemen to greet the *a zhang* 'bride's escorts'. They waited at the edge of my home community, flung liquor into the sky from a decorated bowl, and beseeched the Three Jewels[79] and mountain deities as they met the bride and her escorts. They stopped about a hundred meters from my family's tent and repeated what they had done earlier.

When the bride and her escorts neared my home, they passed between two of our horsemen who were holding the ends of a long white cloth. One of the bride's escorts took it while galloping and put it inside his robe pouch. At that time, one of the escorts turned and raced away on horseback, and all our horsemen gave chase until they got in front of him. If they didn't get in front of him, it meant the horseman from the bride's home had won. The bride's side chose their fastest horse. The guests found this very interesting and talked about the winning horse. Both sides chose their best horse. It was very competitive.

Next, our two female singers began singing '*gyog ba* 'song for greeting the bride and her escorts'[80] and moved forward with other local women to greet the bride. One young woman, whose age was the same as the bride's, gave a *kha btags* to the bride's escorts, who gave one in return. This ritual was called *rta kha len pa*. The bride's side also handed the bride's horse's reins to the local women who helped the bride dismount onto a piece of white sheep felt after she and her escorts reached the groom's black yak-

hair tent. Our family wanted the bride to dismount a bit further from our tent to indicate respect for our status and reputation. The bride's escorts, however, didn't hand the bride's horse's reins to our women. They insisted on dismounting at the entrance of the tent.

•••

The bride was the center of attention. She covered her face with both robe sleeves while walking in the company of local women. Nobody could see her face on her wedding day, even the groom. Children ran around her, eager to see her face. When she entered the groom's tent, her brother or a male cousin pulled her hat back a little. Normally, the groom's mother or grandmother stood at the tent entrance and pulled the bride's hat forward, which meant that the groom's mother agreed that the bride would call her "mother" and was now one of her family members. We didn't do this, because I didn't have a living mother or a grandmother.

My bride was seated in front of the hearth, where our family was boiling milk tea in a pot. The rim of the pot was wrapped with tufts of white sheep wool. Once the bride sat on a piece of white sheep felt, the bride's escorts sat in order of age from eldest to youngest on the right side of the tent where plates of fried bread and cooked mutton had been placed. The bride was offered a bowl of milk tea first. The rim of the bowl was also decorated with white sheep wool.

A woman flicked milk tea into the sky with a scoop, gave a tea speech, and eloquently asked the bride's older escorts for the *bu re* 'a piece of colorful silk cloth for women of the groom's side'. The bride's escorts usually brought colorful silk and a *kha btags* for the women on the groom's side. The only way for local women to get it was by saying very good proverbs or making fun of the bride's escorts. If the women from the groom's side defeated the men from the bride's side by teasing or making fun, they got the *bu re*. All the women laughed loudly as a woman representative talked to the bride's escorts. If the women defeated their opponents, but still didn't get their gift, they grabbed the young man sitting at the end of the bride's escort line, and forcefully removed his robe, demonstrating their power. The women usually got their gift by talking or removing the young man's robe.

Next, some of our men *lta ba yas* 'sang folk songs' and offered a bowl of liquor to the bride's escorts, who flicked liquor into the sky three times using their right ring finger, and then drank the remainder. It was now time for the bride's side to sing to our elders.

Later, a man gave a speech blessing to the new couple. At the end of his speech, he said, "*Sha khya rgod lu gu rtse rtse byos, ma khya mo glag mo mchong mchong byos* 'Play like a lamb and grab like a hawk."[81] In front of our tent, everyone, except the bride, her escorts, local elders, and my family, separated into two groups and prepared to struggle over a whole uncooked sheep carcass that had been placed between them. Their eyes shone, and they held their breath. When the speaker finished, the crowd grabbed the carcass and pulled it in every direction, tearing it into pieces. Women took home what they got, while the men returned what they got to my family. We cooked it and shared it with the locals at the wedding party. The carcass was a gift from someone, and we chose the fattest carcass for this game.

•••

After all of this, it was about noon, and the bride had already moved to her small tent. Some married women whose natal home was in Co ser accompanied her. My family arranged the bride's younger escorts outside the tent, where they started singing love songs with local unmarried girls. Most people moved to the love song party. Female singers and other women stood in front of male singers during the singing. About five meters separated the bride's escorts and our female singers. Older women also came and found a place where they could easily hear the songs and see the singers. They discussed who had a nice voice and who among the bride's escorts knew many songs. Men who were embarrassed in front of their female relatives when they heard love songs sung, entered the tent and listened to the bride's older escorts and local elders' conversation. They could still clearly hear the love songs.

Our side's younger women wore their best robes and ornaments to attract the bride's escorts' attention. The only way to show their emotion was through singing. In the bride's escorts' eyes, the local young women were all attractive on the wedding day. They ignored family

background and things like unclean bones[82] since there were no obvious clues about this. Consequently, the bride's younger escorts and local young girls enjoyed this time by singing love songs.

At the beginning of the love song party, the bride's younger escorts and local younger women didn't sing love songs. Instead, they sang auspicious songs until one of the bride's younger escorts sang:

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Ri mthon po yod na dma' mo byos,
Nga bya rgyal khyung chen 'phur rgyu yin.
Nang ming sring yod na kha kha byos,
Nga glu ba gral nas 'khor rgyu yin.

If you are tall mountains, please be low,
I, the king of birds, am going to fly.
Please stay separate from your siblings if you are present,
I, the singer, will sing love songs.

They sang love songs to each other until sunset. It was also a golden time for girls who were new song learners. When beginners ran out of songs, older women supplied new lyrics. The beginners memorized what the older women said and didn't let the bride's men defeat them.

Meanwhile, the bride's older escorts and our elders made conversation adorned with proverbs, and drank highland barley liquor in our family tent. Father enjoyed the conversation with the bride's older escorts. Uncle and women relatives busily cooked meat and boiled tea to serve guests while listening to the elders' conversation. Uncle frequently tended the guests' horses while listening to the love songs.

Before sunset, most locals returned home to collect their livestock and to milk, and except for the older adults, returned to the wedding.

The bride's escorts enjoyed fried bread and cooked mutton. The bride's escorts and local girls started singing love songs again and continued until midnight, while elder escorts drank barley liquor and continued conversations with many proverbs. Father and Uncle didn't sleep that night. They went out periodically to check on the guests' horses and their saddles. Most of the bride's escorts left with their love song partners, spent the night outside, and didn't return until early the next morning when we discovered the tails of all the *tshang ra* 'rump with the tail attached' had been cut off, though very little had been eaten. We knew the bride's side was testing to see if my family had enough *tshang ra* to fill all the plates again. It was customary to replace cut mutton or mutton that had been eaten. If the tails of the *tshang ra* had been cut off, fresh *tshang ra* and other mutton were put on each tray. Otherwise, the mutton was considered incomplete. It was shameful for the family not to have enough meat to treat their guests. Fortunately, my family had received fifteen sheep carcasses as wedding gifts, so we immediately added fresh mutton and *tshang ra*, which killed their arrogance.

The bride and her escorts returned home that morning after breakfast. When they were about to leave, some younger escorts and local girls sang love songs describing how much they would miss each other.

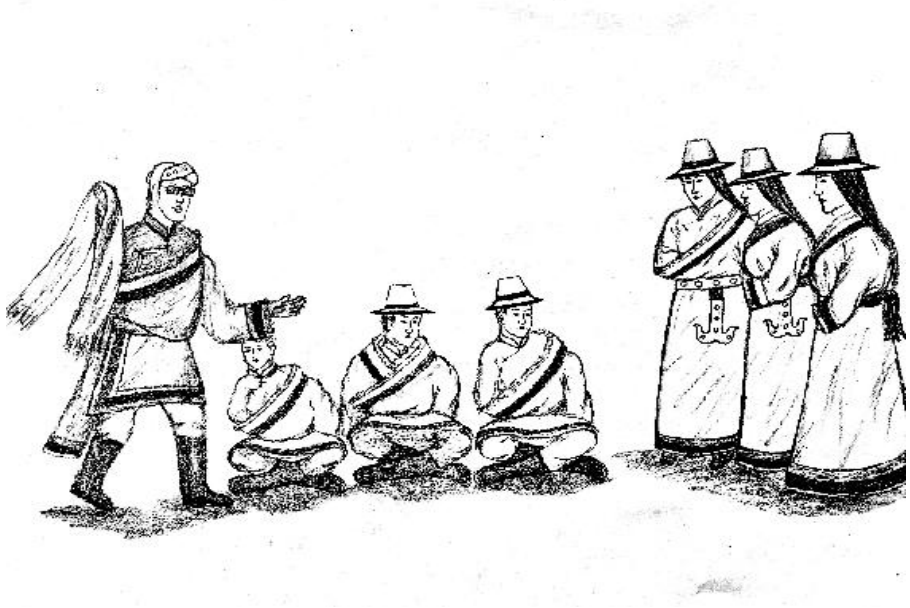
On my wedding day, I stayed in a neighbor's tent. It was the custom that the groom did not see his bride's face

until she came to his family's tent the second time.

FIG 39. The bride was the center of attention at her wedding. She covered her face with both robe sleeves while walking in the company of local women. Nobody saw her face on her wedding day, including the groom.



FIG 40. The bride's younger escorts and local younger women sang love songs to each other until sunset.



15
LO DIVORCES AND REMARRIES, AND BRIDEWEALTH

We divorced the same year. Though my family's living condition was poor, I didn't like her. Furthermore, I had been dating Gcod pa thar since we had been in the same camp in the Bla brang Territory. She was one of Klu rgya's daughters and married to a man from the Rung chung Tribe. Klu rgya had made this arrangement when she was sixteen. She didn't want to stay with her new husband and often escaped to her parents' home, especially when she was herding livestock on the mountain near her parents' tent. Klu rgya would be angry when she returned, beat her, and send her back. She would then run crying to the small stream that flowed near her parents' tent and leave after washing her face. She did this again and again. She even tried to commit suicide by jumping off a cliff near her parents' tent. Fortunately, she was only a little injured. As usual, her father soon sent her back to her husband.

Klu rgya was the head of the Thang ta Tribe and worked hard for his tribe. He was well known for this, and everyone respected him as much as they respected their parents. He knew about our relationship but never said anything about it directly to me, even though we had been on bandit raids together.

Klu rgya had been a very good herdsman when he was younger and had more than 700 sheep. Every summer, he moved to the Klu tshang Area with his livestock from my home community, because he had many relatives there.

One day, Klu rgya stole and hid some horses from a family in the same area. Later, the horse owner came to his tent and asked him to return his horses. Klu rgya said he wasn't the thief and one of his uncles swore that his nephew would never steal anything. The horse owner left but soon returned with his horses and a witness who said he had seen Klu rgya drive the horses away. Convinced Klu rgya had lied, his uncle expelled him from his camp and took

possession of all his livestock. Klu rgya then bought a horse and rifle. Klu rgya's bandit life started in this way.

As soon as Klu rgya's tribe reached A mchog 'bo ra, a local official arrested and jailed him and another man for their crimes against Ma's soldiers. However, Klu rgya convinced the local official to release his partner, insisting that he was the instigator and responsible for everything. He also sent word to his relatives to put a saw-blade in a loaf of bread when they visited him.

His relatives did so, and after telling Ge sar stories to the jail guards till they went to sleep that night, he cut off his shackles with the saw-blade, took the bread, and left the jail. As soon as he was outside, two dogs ran toward him. He threw them the bread and fled.

As the saying goes, *Brkus byas nas nam yang rgyu thog la mi rgyag* 'You can never get rich by stealing'. Klu rgya was a thief for decades, but he was never rich again. When his daughters married, his livestock increased. He received about one hundred sheep from the groom's family[83] when his second daughter, Klu mo yag, married at the age of thirteen. He was very generous and shared whatever he stole with his peers and neighbors when he returned home. Consequently, many of his peers wanted to steal things with him rather than go on bandit raids with others.

One day I was herding sheep and heard a gunshot. I felt something was wrong, and then I saw sheep running from the top of a mountain as some men fled. A man was lying on the mid-part of that mountain. I jumped on my horse and galloped there. It was Klu rgya. Despite his many battles, he had never been injured, though his mount had been shot. This time a bullet had passed through his body while he was herding sheep. I held him in my arms. His breathing was very shallow. Sha bo and our camp members soon arrived. He told Sha bo, "*Nga la mi rta bco brgyad kyi sdig yod* 'I have committed sins for the death of eighteen men and horses'."

As he slowly closed his eyes, the women wailed louder. Klu rgya was only forty-six.

After Klu rgya's death, Gcod pa thar returned home and, though her husband's family urged her, she never returned to his home. Two years later, I brought her to my

family's tent. In the beginning, her mother and eldest brother didn't agree, but she insisted, and they eventually consented. My family had about six yaks and thirty sheep at that time.

My family held a simple wedding ceremony for us. My family's condition didn't allow for a grand wedding. There were few guests and only a few gifts of sheep carcasses. All the guests were our relatives and neighbors.

Before our wedding, Gcod pa thar's oldest brother came and drove all my family's yaks away as the bridewealth. Later, her family returned a milk yak. The bride's family could take as many of the groom's livestock as they wanted. There were no limits. Sometimes, the bride's family drove away all the groom's family's livestock, and the groom's family had to accept it.

16
LO'S LAST BANDIT RAID (1950)

One night my friends, 'Jam dpal and Ston pa, and I went to the Rol lce Area just above Stong che, and drove some bulls back home without anyone noticing. The following day, we slaughtered all the bulls, wrapped the flesh in bullskin, and put it in Ston pa's home. Bull blood stained our clothes.

"Look! Who are they?" a friend suddenly exclaimed. We were all astonished at seeing dozens of people on a small hill near Ston pa's tent. We immediately recognized Rol lce dpon po 'leader of the Rol lce Area', Phag mo bkra shis. He shouted, "Hey! We lost some bulls last night. May we enter your tent and check? We have just checked the other tents."

We were anxious and didn't know what to do. "Check our home? Who do you think you are?" exclaimed 'Jam dpal.

"I'm sorry, but our lost bulls are very important to us farmers. We can't cultivate our fields without them!" declared Phag mo bkra shis.

"Nonsense!" 'Jam dpal shouted and entered his tent.

"We just want to make sure! Also, it wouldn't be good if my friend, Bangban, learned that I didn't check your home," Phag mo bkra shis said.

We followed 'Jam dpal into the tent, ignoring them, but as soon as we were inside, we prepared our weapons.

"Look! They left!" someone whispered.

Indeed, they had left to check other tents. We worried that Bangban would learn of our refusal. Nothing good was in store for us. Their people had seen our blood-stained clothes and would suspect us.

Fortunately, we heard that Bangban had returned to his own home in Ka chu and the Rol lce people didn't report us.

PART TWO
LCAGS MO BYAMS

17
LITTLE BROTHER, CHOS LO, AND FATHER'S DEATH

LITTLE BROTHER'S DEATH

Three years after we got to Bla brang, Little Brother and I were put inside milk churns for the journey back to our homeland. Brother was very young, and I cared for him like a mother. I told him stories, like a grandmother would, the whole time we were stuck in those two churns. I didn't care if he understood, or if my stories were complete while our parents and older siblings drove our livestock. I don't remember a boring moment during those two months of travel on the back of a yak.

That is my earliest memory of my little brother.

I was eleven when my father (Klu rgya) was murdered, but I didn't feel sad because I believed he would return one day. In contrast, when my little brother died the same year, I suffered terribly and cried. He was my only playmate, and I realized he would never come back. It was my first time to lose someone I truly loved. I then understood what death was.

After returning to our homeland, I lived with a childless neighbor, Chos lo, who was a widow. She didn't remarry after her husband, Ku mur, was killed. When I was about four or five, my parents and Chos lo cared for me. Chos lo told very good stories and made tasty food, so I preferred staying in her tent. I don't remember when I started calling her "Mother." I had heard that Chos lo had asked to adopt me before I was born and that my parents had agreed. However, I went back and forth between both tents, so I had no worries.

I had three brothers and two sisters. Everyone was old enough to help our parents, except for me and Little Brother, who was my only playmate.

When my siblings were young, Mother boiled fresh milk almost every day to make yogurt. There was a moment we eagerly waited for - the moment we could eat *zang ngo*

'burned milk on the pot bottom'. Every time my biological mother boiled milk, she poured it into another container to make yogurt after the milk had cooled a bit in the pot. After she emptied the milk into the container, she took a knife and divided the piece of scorched milk solid. As the saying goes, "*Zas pha mas bgos na che chung med* 'There is no sense of big or small when parents divide food among their children'." We had no disagreement when we each ate our portion. *Zang ngo* was the most delicious food I ate as a little child. We all liked milk, but we preferred *zang ngo*. It was very tasty, and there was very little in the pot.

Second Brother learned how to scorch milk on the pot bottom when Mother boiled milk. When she wasn't watching, he added yak dung to the stove to make the fire stronger, and then there was more scorched milk. Once, Mother rushed to the stove where her full milk pot was about to boil over. She added cold milk, placed the pot on the ground, and took out some burning yak dung from the stove. We ran out of the tent as she scolded, "Who added fuel? You have ruined my pure milk. It smells burned. You children have prevented me from making good yogurt today!"

However, she called us later and we were pleased to see what we had hoped for - a large piece of burned milk on the pot bottom, though it tasted stronger than usual. No one ate the yogurt Mother made that day.

I often took Little Brother to Chos lo's tent. She made *zang ngo* for me, knowing it was my favorite. "Lcags mo byams, would you like some *zang ngo*? I kept it for you," she would say kindly.

Sometimes, she poured a bowl of boiled milk for Little Brother and me. She never let us drink unboiled yak milk. I saw neighbor children take their bowl as soon as they got up and walk naked to the milk yaks where their mothers were milking. After their mother poured fresh milk from her wooden bucket into their bowls, they went back to their tent holding their bowls tightly. Chos lo never gave me unboiled milk and also never let me eat yogurt until it cooled. She said eating warm yogurt was just like drinking living goat blood. I believed her and repeated it to Little Brother, who stopped asking for it. I guess he also believed it.

Chos lo fried bread when I told her I missed it. This surprised me since I only ate such bread during Lo sar or at close relatives' weddings. I also enjoyed the *rtsam pa* she made for her meal, not because I was hungry, but because it was so delicious.

FATHER'S DEATH

One winter afternoon, when the sun was burning in the middle of the sky above the ravine where our camp was, I saw Father come out of the tent with his rifle and follow the sheep up the mountain. This was just after we had driven our sheep back and forth on the level ground near our camp the whole morning after spreading dried barley stalks on the ground. We forced the sheep to walk back and forth to separate the barley grain from the stalks.

Two days earlier, Father had said that he missed Klu mo yag who had moved to her new husband's home when she married at the age of thirteen. Of course, Father had arranged this marriage. It had been almost a year since she had gone to her husband's home in Ka rgya, which was about one day away from my community on horseback. Father said he was going to bring her home for a while. Oldest Brother then suggested he could bring her with Oldest Sister's husband, Rta lo, and Father finally agreed. A one-day horse trip was not an issue, but many bandits would do whatever they wanted to you. That was one reason Second Sister hadn't visited home for a year. The next morning before daybreak, Oldest Brother left with Rta lo.

Oldest Sister, Gcod pa thar, went to her husband's home at the age of sixteen. Her marriage was also arranged by Father, though he knew she was dating Lo.

I heard a sudden gunshot from somewhere while I was in Chos lo's tent. It was unusual to hear a gunshot near our camp. I rushed outside and saw neighbors coming out of their tents, looking for the source of the gunshot. Men and women from our camp rushed to the mountain where Father had just gone. I heard someone clearly announce, "Klu rgya has been killed!"

I didn't understand what it meant, but I felt scared and alone like I often felt at night. Chos lo had ordered me not

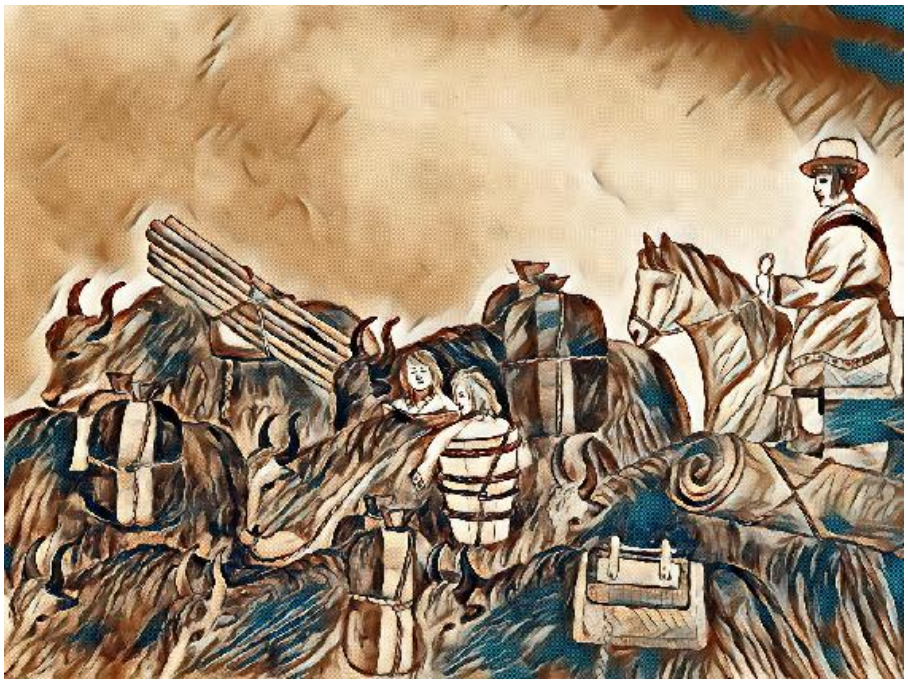
to go anywhere. I looked around and noticed all the adults were gone. Only we children remained.

Later, Oldest Brother said they were on their way home and took a shortcut across the Mu ge thang Area, which was about half-a-day from my family's tent by horse. They saw local herdsmen walk away and kept a distance to prevent them from asking questions, thus avoiding trouble. Oldest Brother said that he was sure someone had died in my family and thought it might have been our oldest sister, Gcod pa thar, who had tried to commit suicide once by jumping off a cliff.

Our parents would not agree to the divorce Gcod pa thar wanted. She herded her husband's sheep almost every day and drove the sheep up on the mountain near our parents' camp. She would then visit our home. Father always kicked her out of the tent immediately and sent her back to her husband's sheep. However, she would follow Father back home and wouldn't leave until he angrily beat and scolded her some more. Eventually, she would leave but look back sadly at our tent after washing her tearful face at the stream just below our camp. Even though our parents always sent her back to her husband's tent, she continued to come to our parents' tent whenever she was herding her husband's sheep.

Brother and Klu mo yag never imagined the dead man would be Father. It was impossible for anyone in my camp and the nearby communities to imagine his death. Father had never been injured in conflict, not even by a single bullet. Our neighbors enjoyed camping near my family's tent because of Father and Sha bo's leadership. It was because of them that all the families were able to return home after three years in Bla brang.

FIG 41. Little Brother and I were put inside milk churns for the journey back to our homeland from Bla brang. I told Brother stories all the way while we were in those churns.



18
MY UNEXPECTED MARRIAGE

UNCLE'S INCARNATION

Where are you from?" Father often asked me, with a big smile. Sometimes, other close relatives teased me with the same question in a humorous way because I was considered the incarnation of Father's brother, Zhi mo thar. About one year before I was born, Father's brother, whom I never saw, went on a bandit raid in the Dme shul Area with Ku mur and his bandit friends. As he and his friends were about to drive some horses away, locals suddenly attacked, injuring Uncle. His friends escaped with the rifle cover he provided, but the locals caught Uncle. His bandit friends returned at night, and located Uncle surrounded by men in a tent, who asked again and again, "Where are you from?"

Uncle's bandit friends couldn't rescue him. He was killed there. They reported this to Father as soon as they returned.

Father consulted Rdor jag Lha pa for a good day to take revenge. They left on the designated day. Every family from our camp escorted them some distance away amid thick incense smoke.

After about three days on horseback, they reached the camp where Uncle had been killed. The tents were pitched in a circle, and about ten horses were grazing in the camp center. Father and another man wearing *phrug* robes pretended that they were looking for their lost livestock, while the other men hid, waiting for Father's order. Father and the other man entered the camp, moved near the horses without attracting attention, and drove the horses slowly out of the camp until a watchdog barked. The rest of the camp watchdogs soon joined in. Camp members rushed out of their tents. Shouting and barking mixed. As they were driving the horses, a few pregnant mares moved slowly. Father's friends anxiously beat their bellies with their swords, and the mares aborted their foals.

When they noticed a man with a rifle pursuing them, Father sent his men ahead with the stolen horses, while he

and the other man exchanged fire. Father's horse was injured, and some of his friends returned to help him. The local man shouted, "Who are you? How dare you steal my horses!"

Father realized it was Dme shul 'jigs ser, a famous sharpshooter, who had never been injured by a gunshot. People believed that bullets couldn't pierce his body. Whenever he came home from fighting, he took the many bullets out of his robe pouch that people had fired at him.

Dme shul 'jigs ser stopped when he realized it was Klu rgya who had come to take revenge. Father was also well-known for never having been injured by gunfire. Father's men also didn't shoot at Dme shul 'jigs ser because they didn't want to waste their bullets.

In the same year, Uncle's bandit partners all died, including my adoptive mother's husband, Ku mur, who was killed in the Lha sde Area. They were a team and curiously all died in the same year. They had stolen property from a *bla ma*, who had cursed them.

SECOND SISTER

Klu mo yag came home wearing a nice robe and a coral necklace. With her attractive, newly made braid, she looked beautiful. She wept when she learned about Father's death. I asked her why she hadn't washed her feet when I saw her lower legs were dirty with yak dung and mud. She complained, "Evil property! Never expect to be rich! It only brings misfortune!"

Her husband's family was very rich, with over one hundred yaks and 500 sheep. Everyone thought she was lucky, but she told me that she had to get up very early every morning and together with a little girl, milk thirty yaks and churn the milk. She got up so early that she milked under the moonlight.

She said, "When there is no light from the moon, it is so dark that we guess the location of each milk yak. Regardless of the weather, we must get up at the same time and stick our warm bare feet into the cold-muddy area where the milk yaks are tied and where the ground is wet with yak urine or rain. The bones of our feet become as cold as ice as we milk with our head against a warm yak."

They milked under sparkling stars. She once went to sleep while she was milking. Fortunately, no one noticed. After driving the yaks to the mountains, they collected yak dung and carried it to their tent in a basket, which was heavier than a full water bucket.

MY UNEXPECTED MARRIAGE

When I was fifteen, I was engaged to Rgya mtsho, the nephew of my adoptive mother's husband and Sha bo. I almost fainted when I heard that he was going to be my husband. I cried. He was ten years older than me. I said it was impossible and constantly sobbed to show my unhappiness. Chos lo reported how I felt and said that she was worried about me and couldn't bear to see me so upset.

A few days later, Sha bo entered our tent as I was grinding barley with a *lag skor* 'grinder' to make *rtsam pa*. I ignored him. It was the first time I had not stood to show respect when he visited. After Father passed away, Sha bo was the person from our camp I respected most. People from our camp stopped and paid attention whenever Sha bo came out of his tent. When he coughed in a high voice, everyone raised their head and paid attention. We pitched our tents in a circle wherever we camped. When we drove our livestock to new pastures, Sha bo and other elders would go first to choose a location for our camp that night with specific instructions as to where each family should pitch a tent. Every family followed their instructions. We were satisfied with the places they selected and thought the assignment of tent sites was fair.

My heart almost jumped into my mouth when he came near me as I was grinding barley. He squatted and took some roasted barley grain in his right hand. I heard him chewing. I kept grinding with my head down and tears rolling down my checks.

"You think he's not good looking? He's not as tall as you?" he scolded. "Your father asked me to take care of you before he closed his eyes. I promised I would. Furthermore, Chos lo has raised you since you were a baby. Now it's time for you to repay her!"

I was terrified and didn't notice when he left. I had no one to consult. I thought I should respect causality and not

disappoint my adoptive mother, who had been so kind to me.

Soon after Rgya mtsho drove one hundred sheep to the tent where my adoptive mother and I lived. He was wearing a new lambskin robe, riding a horse, carrying a rifle, and was escorted by his uncle, Sha bo. I was then considered Rgya mtsho's wife.

Rgya mtsho was Sha bo and Ku mur's nephew. His father was a mystery. Rgya mtsho grew up at Sha bo's home after his mother married another man. Rgya mtsho herded his uncle's sheep until he was twenty-five.

Rgya mtsho remembered Chos lo's husband, Ku mur. When Rgya mtsho was a child, his uncle, Ku mur, often took him to the mountains to herd sheep and taught him how to shoot a rifle. Once, when he was wearing Ku mur's big silver amulet, he rolled down a mountain slope. When Ku mur finally caught up with him, the sharp edge of the amulet had almost cut off Rgya mtsho's nose, leaving a visible scar.

FIG 42. Sha bo entered our tent as I was milling barley grain to make *rtsam pa*.



19
SERIOUSLY ILL AND A *DOPON'S* EXORCISM

VERY ILL

When I was about eighteen, I got sick and lay in bed. I only could eat when I lay down. Sometimes I felt very sick and suffered from the pain. At other times, there was less pain, and I could do some home chores.

My family held the annual *skang nga* rite[84] and invited Rdor jag Lha pa to our tent. One day in late autumn, I started boiling tea for him. Suddenly, he stood up, ran to me, kicked me, and beat me with his fists. I realized he was shaking. I had heard he would shake and perform his duties when he met a very seriously ill patient. He continued beating me with his feet and fists.

"*Lha bla mar lung bstan zhus, yang na bdag 'jig gi bdun btsugs nas mjal skor la song* 'Consult the *bla ma* for divination, or invite monks for chanting and go on pilgrimage'," he said while still shaking after a long period of beating me.

Chos lo worried about me when she heard that we had to hold seven days of chanting. We didn't hold such rituals unless someone had died. I realized that Rdor jag Lha pa's long period of beating and kicking me had not expelled the evil that was making me ill.

I felt sick over the following days, even after seven days of chanting by local monks. I didn't know many chants and I also lacked strong religious belief. I pled with Chos lo and Rgya mtsho not to go on a pilgrimage.

Nevertheless, I set off one early morning before dawn, accompanied by Rgya mtsho and his friend, G.yang tho. We walked to the Jo khang[85] and Lha dkar bo temples in Khri ka and returned to our camp three days later. I felt better. I don't know if it was because of exhaustion or if I was really sick, but I constantly heard the sound of a hand drum, even

in my dreams. This sound never stopped. My head felt like it was going to explode.

Chos lo and Rgya mtsho decided to invite Rdor jag Lha pa again to our tent. Rdor jag Lha pa soon arrived with Rgya mtsho. I was in bed. Chos lo took the big pot from the stove and placed it near the stove as Rdor jag Lha pa ordered. Rgya mtsho went out, summoned the neighboring men, and told them to bring their swords. Once they did that, Rdor jag Lha pa put the swords on the rim of the pot in an interlaced pile, took out some triangular pieces of wood, and wrote on them using soot. Next, he put those small triangles into a *sgro ba* 'leather bag'. He had a bag, a sickle, a metal chain, and yak-tail whisk and gave one these to the men and ordered them to catch the evil with those implements.[86]

Rgya mtsho and the other men ran out. I saw Rgya mtsho waving the sickle above him, one neighbor flourishing the yak-tail whisk in all directions, other neighbors holding and shaking the chains, and another man with the open leather bag. They ran among our neighbors pretending to catch something and tying the leather bag very tightly. Meanwhile, Rdor jag Lha pa was watching and waiting for their return in front of our tent. He and Chos lo wore serious expressions.

I burst into laughter as I observed Rgya mtsho and the other men's actions, though I had been scared at the beginning when Rdor jag Lha pa had put the swords on the pot, thinking he was going to slash me with them.

The men returned and handed the bag to Rdor jag Lha pa, who turned the leather bag upside down and opened it above the sword pot. The small triangular pieces of woods tumbled through the interlaced swords into the pot. He listened with his ear close to the pot, listened again, and finally said, "We haven't caught it!"

Rgya mtsho and other neighboring men left with the same implements again after Rdor jag Lha pa put the triangular wood pieces back into the leather bag. They returned after running among the nearby livestock and around some small hills. After closely listening to the pot, Rdor jag Lha pa said they still hadn't caught it and led this group to catch the evil.

They returned, panting heavily, and wearing tired expressions. Rdor jag Lha pa listened again after he poured the wood triangles into the pot. Suddenly he wore a different expression and listened more intently to the pot. With his ear almost touching the interlaced swords, he said in a woman's voice, "Bring back my skin bag!"

We were all confused. Chos lo and I looked at each other, wondering what the skin bag was. We didn't have such a bag.

"She said, 'Bring her skin bag!'" Rdor jag Lha pa repeated more loudly.

Chos lo immediately stood and searched for the bag inside our tent, though she knew we didn't have such a bag. Chos lo told Rdor jag Lha pa that we didn't have such a bag.

Rdor jag Lha pa said more clearly, "Bring my bag!" as he continued listening to the pot.

I suddenly remembered a bag with some potatoes a neighbor woman had given me before she passed away, which is why I had not returned the bag to her.

"What are you going to do with it? Why did you keep it?" Rdor jag Lha pa shouted. After I handed it to him, he threw it into the pot with all his strength, scattering the interlaced swords.

I felt a little better, but not completely recovered.

CURED BY A *DPON*

My family decided to consult a *bla ma* for a divination, who said there was hope if we invited a *dpon* 'tantric practitioner' from Ser rgya. So the next day, Rgya mtsho and his friend brought one from Ser rgya. As I lay in bed, a neighbor child rushed to our tent, exclaiming, "The *dpon* has arrived!"

I wasn't planning to get up, but the kid added that he had never before seen such a person. The tantric practitioner appeared in our tent with a huge mass of braided hair wrapped around his head. I recovered immediately after the tantric practitioner held a *btso*. Afterward, he held this ritual annually. *Btso* was a way of treating sick people by boiling *shug pa* 'juniper' in water. The *dpon* came to my tent and held the ritual to treat illness or prevent illness in the coming year. He chanted Ban

scripture though he was a Bon practitioner. Later, he married a local girl and lived in my home community. He held the ritual and also gave a new amulet to each of my family members. As the juniper water boiled, he wet our head, neck, and back.

When holding the rite for livestock, he heated a hoe head and a pebble in a fire until they glowed red. He put the red pebble between his teeth and then put a white cord through the hoe head. His hands held each end of the cord as he moved the red hoe head quickly back and forth on the cord. He came to each of us and forcefully blew on our face and neck. We felt hot each time he blew. He then rushed toward the livestock we had brought near our tent. We could see the red hoe head between his hands and the red pebble between his teeth as he ran among our sheep. He said the cord that carried the red hoe head would break when he encountered very sick people or livestock.

20
RDOR JAG LHA PA'S LIFE AND DEATH

One day, Rdor jag Lha pa drove his family's sheep to a mountain, where he soon fell asleep and dreamed of a Chinese soldier who brought him a new suit of clothes and left without a word. He curiously gazed at the new clothes and the stranger. Rdor jag tried to speak, but he could not. Suddenly awakened by a gentle breeze, everything seemed fresh for him, and he noticed *lha chas* 'spirit medium's clothes' beside him.

Some said that the Chinese man he had dreamed of was Yul lha Deity, which he then worshipped his entire life, though he also was possessed by other deities such as A ma lcam and Bsang ri.

Chos lo said that she and Rdor jag Lha pa had the same ancestor and that they were cousins. I don't know how they were cousins, but I knew we were close relatives.

Women visited each other in our camp. I went to Rdor jag Lha pa's tent with Chos lo or by myself. A *gsur khog* 'plate used to offer incense' was attached to a pole in his tent. He regularly offered incense to deities, especially to Yul lha. The inside of the tent was black from the incense smoke that seldom stopped wafting there.

Rdor jag Lha pa used swords when he performed as a spirit medium. When I was little, Rdor jag Lha pa was the spirit medium most people consulted. He stabbed his body with swords when he treated seriously ill people.

Another spirit medium also stabbed himself while performing rituals. Locals later learned he was pretending. The swords he used were going under his arm.

A ma lcam and Bsang ri are mountains in my home community that were often worshipped by locals. If someone wanted to consult A ma lcam, Rdor jag Lha pa behaved like a woman while performing rituals, covering his lower face with one robe sleeve and shaking his other sleeve like a girl.

One day, Rdor jag Lha pa and a tantric practitioner, Smar khams tshogs gnyis, quarreled. Each was very proud of his own abilities and wouldn't acknowledge the other's abilities. Smar khams tshogs gnyis was from a nearby community. He became ill and soon, his mouth became twisted. His wife's mouth also twisted and shrank. Soon afterward, Smar khams tshogs gnyis' son-in-law saw a pack of wolves approaching their family's sheep. He grabbed his rifle, aimed at one wolf, and pulled the trigger. To his surprise, the gun didn't work. He became more anxious as he saw the wolves running towards his sheep and examined his rifle to see if something was stuck in the rifle's barrel. Tragically, he shot himself and died. People from our community believed that Rdor jag Lha pa had cursed Smar khams tshogs gnyis' family.

• • •

Many rumors about the new government's army circulated just before a period of chaos in 1958. Locals often consulted Rdor jag Lha pa who claimed that there was no need to worry, it was a brief storm, and people would soon see the blue sky and warm sun again. Locals felt relieved when they heard this.

Locals heard more rumors and asked Rdor jag Lha pa to consult the deities. He did so and repeated that it was just a brief storm.

Locals gathered at the foot of a mountain in my community. Some anxiously offered incense as others called to their deities. After Rdor jag Lha pa was possessed, he called a local man, O rgyam, to come near him. Rdor jag Lha pa blew on barley grain and said there was an obstacle but that he would be protected. He told O rgyam to eat the barley grain, which he did. Later, O rgyam was the only one who survived among his friends, though he suffered a leg injury.

Rdor jag Lha pa's family was initially not required to farm. Instead, they were assigned to herd communal livestock because they had stayed behind while other locals had fled when soldiers came in 1958. People admired those who did light work, such as herding. Most locals had to do heavy work such as plowing grassland but received poor food.

However, Rdor jag Lha pa was soon accused of being a religious practitioner, and all of his family members were

ordered to farm. Rdor jag Lha pa was told he would be publicly criticized the next day. He died after bellowing as loud as thunder that night. Locals thought this meant he was a great man because he had passed away before local women leaders punished him in public. Rdor jag Lha pa was special because he avoided women's punishment, which many *bla ma* experienced.

Rdor jag Lha pa's wife survived starvation and communal work and grew very old. Even when she was more than one hundred, she was healthy. After her family noticed a snake coming out from under her bed, neighbors, including Eldest Brother, asked a spirit medium to divine if her advanced age was good or evil. The spirit medium replied that Rdor jag Lha pa's wife's spirit was possessed by a deity, that she might live longer, and ordered the family to offer a living goat atop Bsang ri Mountain.

Eldest Brother said, "I'm going to persuade 'Jam dpal to do what the spirit medium said, though I'm not sure he will listen to me!"

We laughed after we heard 'Jam dpal's response to Eldest Brother's long persuasion: "Why does a deity need an old woman?"

Actually, he didn't want to lose a goat. 'Jam dpal was Rdor jag Lha pa's son, and he was not religious. When a spirit medium died, his power passed to his grandsons. This was not the case, however, with 'Jam dpal's son, who was Rdor jag Lha pa's grandson. Locals said it was because 'Jam dpal was not religious, which was obvious from what he said when he observed locals doing any religious activity. Once, when I was going on pilgrimage with Rgya mtsho, 'Jam dpal saw us and said, "Please don't forget me when you get wings and are flying in the sky!"

Indeed, Rdor jag Lha pa's wife passed away after 'Jam dpal and his son sacrificed a living goat.

21
BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, UNCLEAN BONES

A young woman, Gnam skyid, was from a family who others said had unclean bones. Very few men came to her family to propose marriage, even though she was very beautiful. There was a distance between families with unclean bones and families who had "pure bones." There were no marriages between the two groups unless the girls from families with unclean bones married men from distant communities. This was also rare. Nevertheless, some young men secretly visited girls from dirty bone families at night. Later, some children never knew who their father was.

Gnam skyid eventually married a young Chinese officer sent by the government to work in Rta ra, a nearby community. Initially, locals didn't accept that a local woman was married to a Chinese man - an outsider. However, they understood when they learned about her family's background.

Later, just before the disturbances, Gnam skyid's Chinese husband died. She soon became a local officer, and often wore a new soldier's uniform, and carried a rifle on her back while on horseback and when monitoring locals working in fields. She resembled a local woman when she wore a woman's robe in winter but seemed to be a man when she wore a man's robe and carried a rifle. Somehow, she was the most beautiful woman in the eyes of the local women. Some considered her a heroine.

A few years later, she married another Chinese officer who was working in the local commune. Her second husband wasn't as handsome as her first. Locals felt that he was not her equal. Locals liked her, not because she was a leader, but because she treated locals fairly.

Some years later, Gnam skyid's second husband was arrested with some other local commune committee members and jailed. Gnam skyid continued to work at the local commune as usual. Afterward, she and Second Brother fell in love, though he already had a wife and a

child. Second Brother forced his wife to leave, and brought Gnam skyid to his home, though his adoptive mother and I opposed it. Gnam skyid was soon pregnant. Second Brother's adoptive mother didn't like Gnam skyid, especially when Gnam skyid put her feet on the stove which filled her with hate, though she dared not openly oppose Gnam skyid. Second Brother's adoptive mother had strong traditional beliefs and believed that putting feet on a stove offended the Stove Deity. Gnam skyid was not religious and, after becoming an officer, had grown accustomed to putting her feet on the stove. Second Brother's adoptive mother called Gnam skyid *'dre rgan ma* 'female demon' when she was absent. She became increasingly desperate and eventually left. Many rumors circulated that Gnam skyid had forced her mother-in-law to leave, so Gnam skyid returned to her parents' home.

Later, locals joked to Second Brother's adoptive mother, who eventually returned to her son's home, that her deity had conquered her daughter-in-law's deity, which locals considered to be a demon.

22
HOSTING GUESTS, REPAIRING TENTS, AND SHEARING SHEEP

Years ago, elders said they enjoyed hosting guests even though their life condition was so poor that they didn't have enough *rtsam pa*. If a guest came and they lacked *rtsam pa*, they quickly borrowed some from neighbors who secretly slipped it through the back tent flap. The host family tried their best to treat their guests and make them feel welcome.

When I was a child, every family repaired their black yak-hair tent when summer came. It was a time for all the women from the camp to gather. It was also the children's favorite time. We called it *ra gso ba* 'repair the tents'. All the camp women came and helped each family repair their tent in turn. It didn't take much time. After repairing the tent, the women who had gathered enjoyed the food the family served.

Other activities included shearing sheep and collecting yak hair. All the camp members helped each family in turn shear their sheep. Some families slaughtered sheep for meat and fried bread when their family's sheep were sheared. Other families baked very thin bread, which we ate with yogurt. It was special food.

When people finished collecting yak hair from a family's yaks, and before having a meal with the family, the children led the way. They held each yak's nose ring one by one and said, "*G.yag zho 'thung gi 'gyo*[88] 'Let's go have yak-milk yogurt'!" before they entered the family's tent for the meal. All the helpers followed the children and repeated the same thing. When people collected yak hair, the yaks were fat, and the yak milk yogurt was considered the best in a year.

When we were young and had guests, we cooked meat and offered food until the guests were truly full.

One time, Rin chen had gone to visit a tent in another camp. Only Mtsho mo, the hostess, was at home. She treated Rin chen well, offering him the best food. Later,

Mtsho mo urged Rin chen to eat more. He refused, explaining that he was really full. Mtsho mo insisted and pulled Rin chen's bowl, but Rin chen refused and pulled his bowl back. They pulled the bowl back and forth until it broke.

23
LEARNING TO DANCE, TSI B+HE PROMISES HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

DANCE

Sha bo was well known for his courage and wealth. He and his wife had no children so they adopted Rin chen, who was their relative. As he grew up, his family arranged a marriage with Tsi b+he. She was thirteen when she came to Rin chen's home. Sha bo's family and my family camped together for years, so Tsi b+he and I became very close friends. We fetched water together and shared news and gossip. Actually, even though we were neighbors, fetching water was the only time we had for ourselves because we were otherwise doing home chores.

When I was about seventeen, government officers organized activities almost every night in a nearby camp. Officers normally lived with the richest families, and that was where they held activities such as dances and Ge sar story-telling. The dance teacher hired by the officers was a young handsome Tibetan, Nor b+he. Tsi b+he and I often went there to watch the dancing as soon as we finished milking the yaks in the early evening. There were many locals there. Later, we decided to learn how to dance, so we went there almost every night and danced while we sang. I still remember some parts of the songs:

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Lha sa'i jo bo bsams nas,
Bca' gzhi'i 'go thag bsdams song.
Drin chen pha ma bsams nas,
Mig mthar mchi ma lhung song.

I start packing,
When I think of the Jo bo in Lha sa.
My eyes fill with tears,
When I think of kind parents.

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Phyi na lcags ri yod pa'i,
Byang phyogs rong bo dgon chen.
Nang na nang rten yod pa'i,
Grub chen bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho.

Enclosed by a powerful wall,
Is the prestigious northern Rong bo Monastery.
The treasure dwelling therein,
Is the great saint Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho.
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
Las dang bsod nams yin zhes,
De ni mgo skor tshig gcig.
Phyug po gong du bkur bas,
Dbul bos mgo skor myangs song.

What is said to be fate and virtue,
Is actually nothing but deception.
Higher position bestowed on the rich,
The poor are met with tricks.[89]

TSI B+HE PROMISES HER MOTHER-IN-LAW

During the commune period, only Tsi b+he and her mother-in-law were in their home. As soon as the local commune was established, their tent was confiscated and they worked in the fields. They also witnessed Sha bo publicly criticized.

Tsi b+he said to her mother-in-law, "*Khyod 'u gnyi kar, gsog rgyu'i rgyu med, ston rgyu'i myi med* 'You and I have no property to save and no manpower to show'."

Tsi b+he gave birth to a son, who soon died. Her parents-in-law never had children. Her husband, Rin chen, was adopted. During the commune period, her father-in-law died. Tsi b+he said to her mother-in-law, "Dear Mother, I felt very sad when Father-in-law passed away, but I wasn't that sad when my biological father passed away. Dear Mother, I swear that I will never leave you. I'll respect and follow karma."

Tsi b+he kept this promise, though, most women left their husband's home after the period of great chaos.

24
GCOD PA THAR'S LAST BIRTH

Second Sister, Gcod pa thar, asked my husband to collect wild leeks from the mountain. She said she wanted to eat leek-dumplings baked in ash[90] just before she gave birth to her seventh child. Second Sister came to my tent to play chess with my husband whenever she had time. She was the most relaxed woman in our camp. All the other local women were busy with their home chores. She didn't milk much, leaving most of the milk for the calves.

Meanwhile, the other women milked three times a day, so there was very little milk for their calves. We disagreed about this. She maintained that my calves would never mature if I didn't let them have more milk from their mothers.

When I was a child, there was plenty of grass everywhere. We drove the yaks to the mountains after the morning milking. At around noon, the milk yaks returned home with full udders, lowing to their calves. After milking, we drove them back to the mountains, and they returned in the late afternoon again with full udders.

We often camped at the foot of mountains, because there was plenty of grass and a stream. Level places in our home community had good grass. Your feet were easily caught by the grass, which was so thick and tall you could hardly walk there.

Locals lived in the east mountains. Herds of *dgo ba* 'antelope' occupied the western mountains and locals didn't herd there because the antelopes were dangerous. They would gore the sheep.

One day, I saw Eldest Brother come out of Second Sister's tent, wearing huge rain boots that made loud clopping sounds. Everyone noticed it except him. He wore an anxious expression and murmured, "She's dying!" He soon walked back inside the tent after forcefully removing

the tent door curtain. Normally, a curtain was used to cover the tent entrance when someone was giving birth.

Suddenly, I remembered Yum skyabs, who was Rdor jag Lha pa's grandson. A spirit medium's ability was usually inherited by his grandson, not by his son. Locals had different ideas about Yum skyabs' spirit medium abilities. Some didn't think he was a spirit medium at all. But Yum skyabs was the only spirit medium I had heard about in our home community after the period of chaos. I told Second Sister's two daughters to take Daughter-in-law to herd the calves and rushed to Yum skyabs' tent, which was near my own tent. As soon as I entered his tent, I begged him to perform a ritual and consult his deity. He said in shock, "It doesn't work for women!"

"Yes, it works! I've heard about your abilities. Please!" I said with teary eyes.

He showed no expression.

"Please, my sister is going to die soon!" I cried and pleaded for his help.

"All right, put some incense in the stove," he said with a red face.

I grabbed his family's incense bag that was hanging from a pole inside his tent. I tossed some into the stove while chanting scripture. His face was very red, and one of his neck veins was as big as his finger. He started trembling but didn't make any sound. He suddenly ran out of his tent and rushed to Second Sister's tent. I ran after him while checking to see if someone was coming. I was ready to prevent trouble.

Lo was shocked by the spirit medium's appearance. No one had expected it. Nobody had seen a ritual with a spirit medium in over fifteen years. It was as if we had all forgotten that there was this way to treat illness. It was forbidden, and trouble came if someone reported it. The spirit medium said nothing, nor did he make any loud sounds. He performed quietly as his body shook. He gestured to us to hand him some barley grain. He blew on the barley grain repeatedly before making Second Sister eat some and then blew on her. At last, he said, "She'll be OK!" which made everyone sigh in relief. Then, he fainted. Lo and I made him drink some milk before we dragged him to my family's tent.

Second Sister's situation worsened, making us very anxious. Rgya mtsho, Lo, and four other neighboring men decided to take her to the township clinic after Rgya mtsho insisted. Meanwhile, others said it was impossible to carry her to the clinic and added that it was not certain if the doctors there could help her give birth. They made a stretcher using two tent poles and carried her to the township clinic, which was about ten kilometers away from our camp on the summer pasture. We didn't know if Second Sister could bear the agony of that journey. All we women could do was wait and pray.

At midnight, we got the news that she had given birth to a son. We were glad and heaved a long sigh of relief.

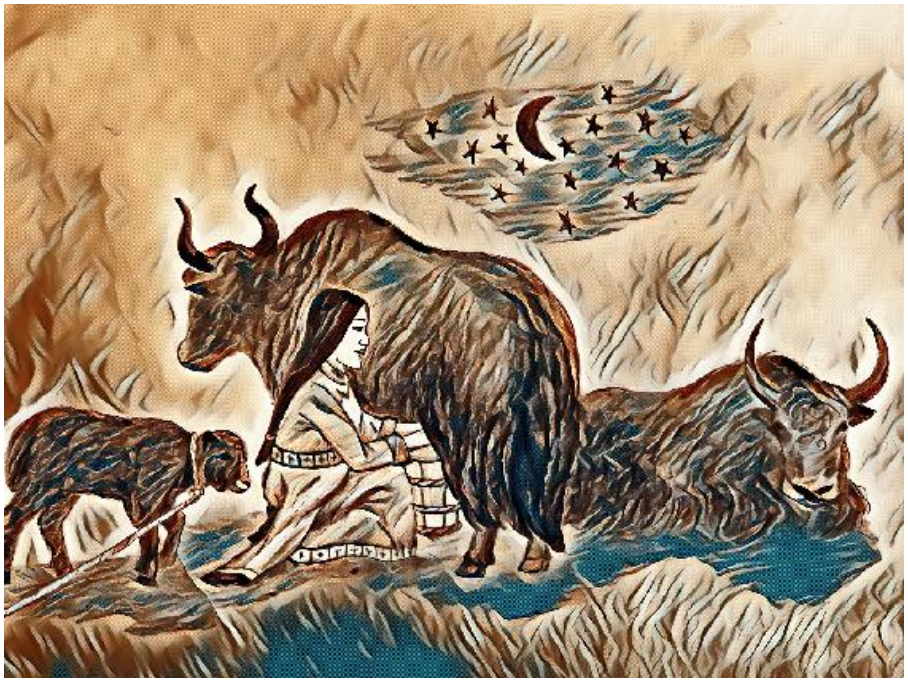
Second Sister returned a few days later, pale and weak. We were pleased she was back and alive. All the neighbors came to see her, but they were not interested in her baby.

When she asked me to nurse her son, I said, "It's more important that you care for yourself."

Furthermore, I had no child and didn't know how to care for a newborn. However, with other women relatives' help, her last son survived. Second Sister was forty-three years old that year.

Later, she often told me that she was very thankful to my husband because he insisted on taking her to the township clinic, while others suggested that she give birth at home.

FIG 43. Gcod pa thar didn't milk much, leaving most of the milk for the calves.



APPENDIX ONE

NAMES OF YAKS, SHEEP, AND HORSES

by

Bu lo, Klu thar rgyal, and Sami Honkasalo[91]

This appendix lists livestock terms given by Bu lo in his native A mdo dialect. Livestock terms belong to the cultural core vocabulary of A mdo Tibetan. Moreover, the language shows an extensive network of such terms where several factors determine the livestock term that is used. The focus on yaks, sheep, and horses illustrates that names are often determined by sex, age, color, patterns, and horn shapes.

The goal here is documentational. Continued use of many of these terms is problematic due to rapid lifestyle changes now confronting A mdo Tibetans. Consequently, documenting this rich terminological diversity is an important task, which is emphasized by scant previous documentation and research (see Ebihara 2018 for pioneering work in Japanese). We hope that this short listing stirs further interest, especially among young Tibetans to document this aspect of their cultural heritage in their respective homelands for future generations.

The names are according to Bu lo and written in his colloquial Tibetan, followed by Wylie. The third item is the term in IPA in which a space separates every syllable for the convenience of readers who wish to compare the colloquial pronunciations with Literary Tibetan. IPA offers an approximation of the actual colloquial pronunciation of the terms in reasonable phonetic detail. This differs from a more abstract phonological transcription that highlights only phonologically relevant distinctions. A strictly phonological description of the speaker's dialect[92] would result in somewhat different transcriptions often with fewer distinctions. For example, what are described here as slightly devoiced nasals (e.g., n̥) are phonologically better understood as consonant clusters with a preinitial. Finally, it should be noted that some livestock discussed in this appendix have multiple names.

Table 4. Yak names: general names, male (horned, polled), female (horned, polled), and color.

Yak (general names)	Male (horned)	Female (polled)	Male (horned)	Female (polled)	Color
□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□ □□□□	□□□ □□□□□□	□□□□□□ □□□	□□□□□□ □□	white
gar dkar	gar langs ngo	gar langs ma	ga ris bo	ga ris ma	
kar hkar	kar laŋ ŋu	kar laŋ ma	ka ri wu	ka ri ma	
□□□□ □□□□	□□□□ □□□□ □□□□	□□□□ □□□□□□	□□□□□□□ □□□	□□□□ □□□□□	grayish
sngo sngo	sngo langs ngo	sngo langs ma	sngo tho bo	sngo tho ma	
ŋo rŋu	ŋo laŋ ŋu	ŋo laŋ ma	ŋo tʰu wu	ŋo tʰu ma	
□□□□ □□□□	□□□□ □□□□□□□	□□□□ □□□□□□	□□□□□□□ □□□	□□□□ □□□□□	dark-brown with white or gray mouth
rgya rgya	rgya langs bo	rgya langs ma	rgya tho bo	rgya tho ma	

rɟa rɟa	rɟa laŋ wu □□□□ □□□□□□□ rgya ya'e bo rɟa je wu	rɟa laŋ ma	rɟa tʰu wu	rɟa tʰu ma	
□□□□□□□	□□□□ □□□□□□□	□□□□ □□□□□□	□□□□□□ □□□	□□□□□□ □□	black
rog rog	rog langs bo	rog langs ma	nag tho bo	nag tho ma	
rɔʁ rɔʁ	rɔʁ laŋ wu	rɔʁ laŋ ma	naʁ tʰu wu	naʁ tʰu ma	
□□□□□□ □□□ geg ga bo	□□□□□□ □□□ ga langs bo	□□□□□□ □□ ga langs ma	□□□□□ □□□ ga tho bo	□□□□□ □□ ga tho ma	white- headed
k(ə)ʁ ʁa wu	ka laŋ wu	ka laŋ ma	ka tʰu wu	ka tʰu ma	
□□□□□□ □□□	□□□□□□□ □□□□	□□□ □□□□□□	□□□□□□ □□□	□□□□□□ □□	mix of black and

khya kya bo	khya langs ngo	khya langs ma	khya to bo	khya to ma	white hair
cʰa ca wu	cʰa laŋ ŋu	cʰa laŋ ma	cʰa tu wu	cʰa tu ma	
	□□□□□□□ □□□ khya ya'e bo cʰa je wu	□□□ □□□□ □□□ khya ya'e bo cʰa je wu			

□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□ □□□ reddish-
□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□ brown
□□ □□□ □□ □□□ □□
ser ser
ser langs langs se ris se
ser bo ma bo ris
go ma
s^her
s^her laŋ
s^her laŋ ma s^he ri s^he ri
s^her wu wu ma
ku
□□□□
□□□ □□□
□□□ □□
□□□ ser
se tho
tho ma
bo
s^her
t^hu
s^her ma
t^hu
wu
□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□ white
mdzi □□□□ □□□□ □□□ □□□ spot on
□□□ □□ □□□ □□ the
'dzi 'dzi 'dzi 'dzi forehead
langs langs tho tho
bo ma bo ma
ndzə
ndzə
laŋ
ma

ndzə	ndzə	ndzə
laŋ	tʰu	tʰu
wu	wu	ma

uncastrated yak □□□□□□□ bag sdi, waʁ də
castrated yak □□□ g.yag, kjaʁ
Table 5. Yak names: age.

Yak	Age
□□□□□□□ bus li vi lə	one-year-old
□□□□□ ya ru ja rə	two-year-old
□□□□□□□□ so gnyis sʰo ɣni	three-year-old
□□□□□□□ so bzhi sʰo vʑə	four-year-old
□□□□□□□ so drug sʰo ʈəʁ	five-year-old
□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□ kha dbang, kha bkang	six-year-old

kʰa ʁaŋ, kʰa kaŋ

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ 'di nas so la lta ba, so zad, so bkyed	After the age of six, a yak is considered old. To estimate its age, the number of teeth is counted, and the distance between the teeth is observed.

Table 6. Sheep names: horned, polled, and color.

Sheep (horns)	Sheep (polled)	Color (color names do not distinguish between male and female)
□□□□□□□□ □□□ rgya langs bo rɟa laŋ wu	□□□□□□□□□□ rgya tho bo rɟa tʰu wu	a black and white head
□□□□□□□□ □□□ rog langs bo roʁ laŋ wu	□□□□□□□□□ nag tho bo naʁ tʰu wu	black
□□□□□□□□□□ gar langs bo kar laŋ wu	□□□□□□□□□ gar tho bo kar tʰu wu	white
□□□□□□□□ □□□ gyo langs bo co laŋ wu	□□□□□□□□□□ gyo tho bo co tʰu wu	brownish
□□□□□□□□□ □□□ smug langs bo mo̱ʁ laŋ wu	□□□□□□□□ □□□ smug tho bo mo̱ʁ tʰu wu	a black face
□□□□□□□□ □□□	□□□□□□□□ □□□	white with white dots on a black

smug khya bo mm̥əʁ cʰa wu	smug tho bo mm̥əʁ tʰu wu	head
□□□□□□□□□□ mog khya bo moʁ cʰa wu	□□□□□□□□□□ mog tho bo moʁ tʰu wu	grayish-brown
□□□□□□□□□ nag khya bo naʁ cʰa wu	□□□□□□□□□ nag tho bo naʁ tʰu wu	blackish with white dots on its head
□□□□□□□□□□ rgya khya bo rɟa cʰa wu	□□□□□□□□□□ rgya tho bo rɟa tʰu wu	white dots on a blackish-brown head
□□□□□□□□ □□□ 'kham langs bo kʰam laŋ wu	□□□□□□□□□□ 'kham tho bo kʰam tʰu wu	light-brown and reddish-brown
□□□□□□□□□□ ga gzhis bo ka ʑi wu	□□□□□□□□ ga tho bo ka tʰu wu	with a white head

Table 7. Sheep names: gender and age.

Sheep (male)	Sheep (female)	Age
□□□□□□ □□□ □□□ lu gu, ho lug lə ʁə, ho ləʁ	□□□□□□ mo lug mo ləʁ	one-year-old
□□□□ lag ga ləʁ ʁa	□□□□□□ lag mo laʁ mu	two-year-old
□□□□□□□□ so gnyis, thung nga sʰo ɣni, tʰoŋ ŋa	□□□□□□□ tsher mo tsʰer mu	three-year-old
□□□□□□□ □□ so bzhi, sha gzan sʰo vʑə, ʃʰa vzən	□□□□□ ma mo ma mu	four-year-old
□□□□□□□ □□ so drug, sha gzan sʰo ʈəʁ, ʃʰa vzən	□□□□□ ma mo ma mu	five-year-old
□□□□□□□ kha bkang kʰa kaŋ	□□□□□□□□ ma rgan ma ma rgan ma	six-year-old

□□□□□□□	□□□□□□□□	seven-year-
lo lon	ma rgan ma	old
lu lun	ma rgan ma	

Table 8. Horse names: color.[93]

Name	Description
□□□□□□□□□□□ rkyang rkyang rcaŋ rcaŋ	dark brown
□□□□□□□□□ □□□ rkyang dmar bo rcaŋ mar wu	light brown and reddish-brown
□□□□□□□ ra ra bo ra ra wu	white
□□□□□□□□□□□ sngo sngo bo ŋo rŋu wu	grayish
□□□□□□□□□□□ sngo mog wo ŋo moʁ ʁu	grayish-brown
□□□□□□□□□□ sngo nag wo ŋo naʁ ʁu	blackish-gray

□□□□□□□
'kham kham
kʰaŋ kʰam

light-brown and reddish-brown

□□□□□□□□
ngang nga bo
ŋaŋ ŋa wu ~
ŋəŋ ŋa wu

camel-colored

□□□□□□
gyo nag
co naʁ

black

□□□□□□□□□□
gyo dmar bo
co mar wu

brownish with dots

□□□□□□□□
sum dkar
sʰəm hkar

white legs

□□□□□□□
mog khya
moʁ cʰa

grayish brown with white dots on its head

□□□□□□□□
rkyang mog
rcaŋ moʁ

grayish brown

□□□□□□□

light-brown and reddish-

kham 'dzi kʰa mdzə	brown with a white spot on its forehead
□□□□□□□ nag 'dzi naʁ ndzə	black with a white spot on its forehead
□□□□□□□□□ rkyang 'dzi rcaŋ ndzə	dark brown with a white spot on its forehead
□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ rkyang 'dzi sug dkar rcaŋ ndzə sʰəʁ hkar	dark brown with a white spot on its forehead; white legs

Table 9. Horse names: age.

Horse	Age
□□□□□□□□ rtus li rti lə	one-year-old
□□□□□□ tho ru tʰo rə	two-year-old
□□□□□□□□ nyis langs ɲi laŋ	three-year-old
□□□□□□□ sho bzhi χo vʑə	four-year-old
□□□□□□ gcig ga ɣtɕəɣ ka	five-year-old
□□□□□□□□ gnyir spa (ą̊)rɲər hpa	six-year-old
□□□□□□□ gsum pa (ɣ)sʰəm ba	seven-year-old
□□□□□□ bzhi ba ʑə wa	eight-year-old
□□□□□ lnga ba rŋa wa	nine-year-old
□□□□□□□□ (□□□□□□□□)□ kha me bzhi (kha rgya kha)	ten-year-old

kʰa me vʑə

□□□□□□□ me mtha'
me mtʰa

eleven-
year-old

□□□□□□□ lo lon
lo lun

considered
very old

APPENDIX TWO

FURTHER READING

1

Bya gzhung blo bzang (2006) is a biographical study of the Skyang rtse incarnation line. 'Bum dge 'dun chos dbyangs dar rgyas rgya mtsho (1835-1875) was the eighth Skyang rtse *bla ma* (123-136). Born in the Skyang rtse Tribe in the Ru sngan area, part of which is now part of Mgo mang Township, his father was a renowned artist. Wanting a son, he worshipped Tara and made more than 100,000 images of Tara. After a son was born, he was called 'Bum dge 'dun, which explains the name (*'bum* 'hundred thousand'). 'Bum dge 'dun chos dbyangs dar rgyas rgya mtsho cured the Jiaqing Emperor (1760-1820), who built a three-floor temple in a Chinese area in gratitude. At the age of sixty, he returned home from the Chinese area and carved the name of each hot spring near its source in Bde skyid Ravine in Khri ka. Later, he traveled to Lha sa, Nepal, and India.

The ninth incarnation Skyang rtse *bla ma* (137-181), Dbul grub chen blo bzang dge 'dun rgya mtsho (1875-1958), was born in the Skyang rtse Tribe in the Ru sngan area. He was renowned for his many abilities, including being able to communicate with those who had died. Once, he reported the needs of the deceased to his father, a rich Chinese, at the request of the latter. When locals were looking for the incarnation of A lags khri rgan rin po che ('Ja' mo Monastery in Khri ka), he dreamed of A lags khri rgan rin po che and divined the birth family of the incarnation, which was later proven true. Local mountain deities obeyed his commands. For example, in 1954 after the stream near the monastery stopped flowing, he commanded A ma lcam Mountain Deity to solve the problem and the stream flowed again. When he was young, locals called him Ban de skya ldang 'Gray Monk', because he often wore sheepskin, and lived as an ordinary monk. In 1908, he moved Ru sngan grwa tshang phun tshogs chos gling Monastery to Bde skyid Valley (Khri ka), as his previous incarnation had wished.

2

Blo bzang bstan pa rgya mtsho and Dge 'dun bstan pa dar rgyas (1994) are the authors of a biography of Rje thar shul dge 'dun chos skyong rgya mtsho (1810-1888), who was born in Reb gong and was the fourth incarnation *bla ma* of the Thar shul bla ma lineage. He began learning Buddhism at the age of five at monasteries such as Bde chen dge tshogs gling and Mgur dgon rnam rgyal gling, and meditated from 1837 to 1847 in a hermitage. He traveled to Lha sa and met the TA la'i bla ma and PaN chen bla ma in 1848.

3

Rje blo bzang rgya mtsho's (2012) biography describes LA mo'i yongs 'dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho (1908-2004), who was born in the Mda' bzhi area near Mtsho sngon po Lake and began studying at Dgon gsar rnam rgyal gling Monastery at the age of six. He was identified as the reincarnation of Yongs 'dzin shes rab rgya mtsho by LA mo in 1915. He later fled to Bla brang Monastery and studied with various renowned teachers such as Rje gung thang blo gros and Yongs 'dzin rje grags pa rgya mtsho. In 1935, he established Thar shul dgon rnam dag khrims ldan gling Monastery in Mang ra and became an advisor to LA mo gong sa'i mchog sprul in 1938. He was chosen to visit Beijing, Tianjin, and Shanghai with local leaders by the PRC government in 1956. Imprisoned in Zi ling in 1958, he reopened Thar shul dgon rnam dag khrims ldan gling in 1982 and devoted himself to the revival of Buddhism in A mdo.[94]

4

Nangchukja's (b. 1987) 2011 work focuses on his childhood and adolescence that involved herding (including experiences with camels) and living in agricultural areas, his educational career, Lo sar visits, night dating, and collecting caterpillar fungus. An appendix by Juha Janhunen presents local toponyms with attention to Mongol origins.

The same author (2015) documented his paternal grandmother (b. 1946), a Mang ra tribal leader's daughter.

The account spans the time before social chaos in 1958 and describes relationships among her relatives.

Nangchakja's 2016 study examines weddings in Bon skor Village, Bya mdo Township, detailing pre-wedding activities, including preparation of clothing, choosing the matchmaker, negotiations, discussion of bridewealth and the dowry, and the mother's instructions to the bride. Materials on the wedding ceremony include speeches, orations, and songs. Childbearing, divorce, and local history based on local elders' accounts are also covered. The first-hand narratives and detail make this an extremely valuable collection of local history and customs.

5

Tsering Bum's (b. 1985) autobiography (2013) contains an important chapter on his grandfather, who escaped with his mother and younger sister to a village near the Yellow River in Dar mtsho (Xinghai) from Dpa' lung (Hualong) to avoid conscription into Ma Bufang's army. They built a house there and lived with locals. However, he fled again to avoid military conscription, supporting himself by herding for rich families and building walls in farming areas. After the collapse of Ma's government, he was reunited with his mother, and they moved to Mang ra.

6

Dam chos rgya mtsho (2002) provides the history of Smar khams Community, located in Mgo mang Township, Mang ra County based on oral recordings from local elders and such works as *Deb thar dmar po*. The focus is on tribal and community origins; *bla ma* and tantric practitioners who were born in Smar khams; local practices of divination, marriage, and migration; Tshogs gnyis 'phel rgyas gling Monastery, located at the center of Smar khams Community; and the post-1958 situation.

7

Btsun kho (2004) and his colleagues spent four years researching and interviewing in an area known historically as Ru sngan. Content includes the original names of tribes, local residents' origins, community leaders, locals who were well known in the early nineteenth century, the political situation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, folktales, local monasteries, incarnation *bla ma* lineages, weddings, eightieth-birthday celebrations, and local taboos (e.g., marriage between relatives and situational, sexual conversation).

8

Ye shes bzang po (2001) concentrates on the history of Mang ra based on folk accounts and history texts. The author suggested the origins of Bdud shul klu tshang, Ban shul, and Thar shul communities; and gives brief histories of five additional communities, including Kha gya and Gong ba. He also includes brief histories for twenty-five villages including Ske ba and Mtha' ba, and monastery histories, including Klu tshang and Thar shul. He also mentions *bla ma* such as 'Ja' mo dge legs bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho (1678-1745) and Ban shul bla ma khya dge tshang (1664-1740); and *dge bshes*, including Bla nag ri khrod pa (1906-1985).

9

Guinan xian zhibianzuan weiyuanhui 'Guinan County Compilation Committee' (1996), describes key events that occurred in the Mang ra area from 476 BC to 1994. For example, in April 1885, Grigory Potanin (1835-1920), passed through Mang ra collecting Ge sar materials. In October 1952, the first veterinarian training course was established in Xiashiduo, Mgo mang Township. A tent primary school was also established in Tsha nag Community. Profiles are given of Tibetan leaders such as Luchao Lejia (1880-1958), who was a local Mang ra resident and in July 1953, became the head of Mang ra County. In 1958, he died in a Zi ling prison.

10

Chen Qingying (1990) provides short descriptions of Mang ra tribes. He describes *sde ba/cun* 'communities/village' as *tsho ba*/*buluo*, and writes that Tsha nag Community is a tribe. In fact, Tsha nag is a community and home to six *tsho ba* - Rnying ba, Dpon tshang, Rdor jag, Thang ta, Nag skor, and Rung chung.

11

Hor gtsang 'jigs med (2009) provides brief descriptions for places and monasteries in Mang ra. His notes on Tsha nag dgon pad dkar chos gling Monastery are incorrect. It is a Dge lugs monastery, not Rnying ma, and it is located in Tsha nag Community, Mgo mang Township, not in Tul rol Community, Mang ra Township, Mang ra County.

12

Lcam rig sras (2011) studies the origin of mountain deities in A mdo, including Mang ra, providing information on local folklore and oral prayers that locals chant when offering incense to deities. For example, thirteen folk accounts and two scriptures are given for A ma lcam Mountain Deity, a female deity.

13

Chab 'gag rdo rje tshe ring (2006) focuses on place names in Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, providing explanations for communities, mountains, and ravines.

14

Tsering Bum et al. (2008) is a detailed, contemporary description of Lo sar activities in Ske ba Village in Mang ra, focusing on food and visiting.

15

Timothy Thurston and Tsering Samdrup (2012) give details of a single Buddhist family's preparations and celebrations of the first fifteen days for the 2010 Tibetan Lo sar in the predominantly Bon community of Stong skor in Mang ra County.

REFERENCES

Blo bzang bstan pa rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ and Dge 'dun bstan pa dar rgyas □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ 1994. *Rje thar shul dge 'dun chos skyong rgya mtsho'i rnam thar □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [Biography of Rje thar shul gde 'dun chos skyong rgya mtsho].* Zi ling □□□□□□□□: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang □□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [Mtsho sngon Nationalities Press].

Btsun kho □□□□□□□□ 2004. *Ru sngan khag gsum gyi lo rgyus dung gi 'bod brda □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [History of Three Sections of Ru sngan].* Zi ling □□□□□□□□: Xining luolan yinwu youxian gongsi □□□□□□□□□□ [Xining Printing Co. Ltd].

Bya gzhung blo bzang □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ 2006. *Grub dbang skyang rtse sku phreng rim byon gyi rnam thar bzhugs so □□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [Biography of the Skyang rtse Incarnation Lineage].* Pe cin □□□□□□□: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [Nationalities Press].

Chab 'gag rdo rje tshe ring □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ 2006. *Mtsho lho'i dmangs khrod kyi rig gnas dpe tshogs, sa ming gi skor □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [Explanation of Toponyms in Mtsho lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture].* Lan gru □□□□□□□: Gan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [Gansu Nationalities Press].

Chen Qingying □□□. 1990. *Zhongguo zangzu buluo □□□□□□ [Tibetan Tribes of China]*. Beijing □□: Zhongguo zangxue chubanshe □□□□□□□ [China Tibetology Press].

Ebihara Shiho. 2018. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□:□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□ [How Yaks are Called in Amdo Tibetan? Case Study in Tsekog, Qinghai] in Iwao Kazushi and Ikeda Takumi (eds) *□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [The Historical Development of Tibeto-Himalayan Civilization]*. Kyoto: Kyoto University Research Centre for the Cultural Sciences, 381-400.

Dam chos rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ 2002. *Smar khams lo rgyus □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [The History of Smar khams].* Zhang kang □□□□□□□: Zhang kang gyi ling dpe skrun kung zi □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [Hong Kong Horse Printing Co., Ltd].

Guinan xian zhibianzuan weiyuanhui □□□□□□□□□ [Guinan County Compilation Committee]. 1996. *Guinan Xianzhi □□□□ [Guinan Annals].* Xi'an □□: Sanqin chubanshe □□□ □□ [Sanqin Press].

Hor gtsang 'jigs med □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ 2009. *Mdo smad lo rgyus chen mo, glegs bum lnga pa □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ [The Political and Religious History of A mdo, the Northeastern Region of Tibet, Volume 5]*. India: [Dharamsaka kangra hp].

Janhunen, Juha and Kalsang Norbu. 2014. Aspects of Amdo Tibetan Segmental Phonology. *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 85:249-276. https://bit.ly/38REdCX, accessed 23 February 2020

Klu thar rgyal. 2017. Dpal rgyal: Artist and Photographer. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 44:395-406. https://bit.ly/321NVi4, accessed 27 August 2019

_. 2019. Herding Pikas. Contemporary Tibetan Short Stories. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 53:307-318. https://bit.ly/3bB2S0d, accessed 15 February 2020

Kondro Tsering. 2012. A Zorgay Tibetan Childhood and the Swedish translation by Katrin Goldstein-Kyaga as Min tibetanska barndom i Zorgay. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 17. https://bit.ly/2ZuLsLA, accessed 27 August 2019

.cam rig sras □□□□□□□□□□□□ 2011. *Yul mdo smad kyi srid pa'i yul lha gzhi bdag gi byung ba brjod pa'i deb ther khra bo* □□□□□□□□□□□□

https://bit.ly/2Pq1SFs, accessed 28 August 2019

Nangchukja. 2015. Witness to Change: A Tibetan Woman Recalls Her Life. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 37:250-278.
https://bit.ly/2HseuW1, accessed 27 August 2019

Nangchakja (Snying lcags rgyal/Niangjijia □□□). 2016. The Last Dragon Banquet? Changing Wedding Traditions in an Amdo Tibetan Community. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 42.
https://bit.ly/33VwYb7, accessed 27 August 2019

Nian Zhihai □□□ and Bai Gengdeng □□□ (eds). 1993. *Qinghai zangchuan fojiao siyuan mingjian□□□□□□□□□□ [The Clear Mirror of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Qinghai]*. Lanzhou □□: Gansu minzu chubanshe □□□□□□□ [Gansu Nationalities Press].

Nietupski, Paul K. 2009A. Nationalism in Labrang, Amdo Apa Alo/Huang Zhengqing in Wim van Spengen and Lama Jabb (eds) *Studies in the History of Eastern Tibet. PIATS 2006: Tibetan Studies, Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. Königswinter 2006*. Halle (Saale): International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 179-207.

__. 2009B. The Fourth Belmang: Bodhisattva, Estate Lord, Tibetan Militia Leader, and Chinese Government Official. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 1:187-211.
https://bit.ly/2U9s1Xx, 27 August 2019

Rje blo bzang rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ 2012. LA mo'i yongs 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po'i rnam thar 'jam mgon bstan pa'i mdzes rgyan, stod cha □□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Sangs rgyas bkra shis with CK Stuart. 2014. Tibetan Marmot Hunting. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 35:49-74.
https://bit.ly/2U5tFtj, accessed 27 August 2019

Smith, Stewart. 2017. *The Monasteries of Amdo. A Comprehensive Guide to the Monasteries of the Amdo Region of Tibet. Volume 2: Central, West and North Amdo.* CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Snying bo rgyal and R Solomon Rino. 2008. Deity Men. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 3.
https://bit.ly/304wTiA, accessed 27 August 2019

Thurston, Timothy and Tsering Samdrup. 2012. An A mdo Tibetan Pastoral Family's Lo sar in Stong skor Village. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 21:33-69.
https://bit.ly/2PqhYyu, accessed 27 August 2019

Tsering Bum (Tshe ring 'bum) □□□□□□□□□□□□ 2013. A Northeastern Tibetan Childhood. *Asian Highlands Perspective* 27.
https://bit.ly/2ZedEXI, accessed 27 August 2019

Tsering Bum, Charles Kevin Stuart, and Gerald Roche 2008. An A mdo Tibetan New Year: Food and Visiting. *Orientalia Suecana* LVII 57:23-45.
https://bit.ly/2UfuYpP, accessed 27 August 2019

Ye shes bzang po □□□□□□□□□□□□□□ 2001. *Mang ra'i lo rgyus* □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ *[History of Mang ra].* Zi ling □□□ □□□□□: Than ma dpe skrun khang [Than ma Book Press].

TIBETAN AND CHINESE TERMS

Tibetan Terms

'ba' □□□□
'bo □□□□
'bri zho 'thung du 'gro □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
'bu kha □□□□□□
'bum □□□□□
'bum dge 'dun □□□□□□□□□□□□□□
'bum dge 'dun chos dbyangs dar rgyas rgya mtsho □□□□□ □□□
'cham □□□□
'dre rgan ma □□□□□□□□□□□
'gyog ba □□□□□□□□
'ja' mo □□□□□□□
'ja' mo dge legs bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
'jam dbyangs bzhad pa □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
'jam dbyangs nag po □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
'jam dpal □□□□□□□□
'phrang dmar □□□□□□□□□
a blo □□□□□□
a lags khri rgan rin po che □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
a ma □□□□
a ma lcam □□□□□□□□
a mchog □□□□□□
a mchog 'bo ra □□□□□□□□□□□□□
Amdo, a mdo □□□□□□
a myes 'ba' tshe □□□□□□□□□□□□□□
a myes ja brgya □□□□□□□□□□□□□□
a pa a blo □□□□□□□□□□
a pha □□□□

a pha lo □□□□□□□
a rda □□□□□
a this □□□□□□
a this bstan pa rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

a zhang □□□□□□
Apa Alo, a pha a blo □□□□□□□□□□
ba kha □□□□
bab ris □□□□□□□
ban □□□
ban de skya ldang □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
ban de thar □□□□□□□□□
ban shul □□□□□□□
ban shul bla ma khya dge tshang □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□
bang a ma □□□□□□□
bcud par rdza rgan □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
bde chen dge tshogs gling □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
bde skyid □□□□□□□□□□
bde skyid chu khol □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
bdud shul klu tshang □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
Belmang, dbal mang □□□□□□□□
bkar □□□□
bla brang □□□□□□□□
bla bya □□□□□□
bla dpon □□□□□□□□
bla dpon a blo □□□□□□□□□□□□□□
bla ma □□□□□
bla ma a this □□□□□□□□□□□
bla nag ri khrod pa □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
blo bzang □□□□□□□□□
bo bza' u rgyan □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
bon □□□□

bon rgya □□□□□□□□
bon skor □□□□□□□□□
brag dkar □□□□□□□□
brkus byas nas nam yang rgyu thog la mi rgyag □□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
bsang chu □□□□□□□
bsang khog □□□□□□□
bsang khri □□□□□□□□
bsang ri □□□□□□□
bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
btsan mo'i nags □□□□□□□□□□□□
btso □□□□
bu lo □□□□□□
bu re □□□□□□
bya mdo □□□□□□□
bya nag gshog ring □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
bya pho drug mo drug □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
byis mo □□□□□□□□
bzho bzung □□□□□□□□□□
ca la nag po □□□□□□□□□□
chad □□□
chos gru □□□□□□□□
chos lo □□□□□□□
chos srid zung 'brel □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
chos tsha □□□□□□
chu khog □□□□□□
co ser □□□□□□□
dam chen □□□□□□□
dar mtsho □□□□□□□
dbu zhwa □□□□□□□
dbu zhwa'i tog □□□□□□□□□□□□
dbul grub chen blo bzang dge 'dun rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

de pho □□□□□□

de ring nyi ma'i phan chad la, 'chi rag nyi ma'i tshun chad la, gcig gis gcig la phan btags nas go chod dgos, myi ring myi rgyud □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
deb thar dmar po □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
dge 'dun bstan pa rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
dge bshes □□□□□□□□□□
dge bshes don grub □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
dge lugs □□□□□□□□□□
dgo ba □□□□□□□
dgon gsar rnam rgyal gling □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
dgu rung mthil □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
dgun sha □□□□□□□
dmag ser □□□□□□□□□
dmar gdan □□□□□□□□□
dme shul □□□□□□□□□
dme shul 'jigs ser □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
dngul sgor □□□□□□□□□□□
don grub □□□□□□□□□□
dpa' bo □□□□□□□□
dpa' lung □□□□□□□□□□
dpal be'u □□□□□□□□□□
dpal ldan □□□□□□□□□
dpal rgyal □□□□□□□□□□
dpon □□□□□
dpon po □□□□□□□□□
dpon tshang □□□□□□□□□□
dril chung □□□□□□□□□□□
dud pa gtags □□□□□□□□□□□□□
dung dkar g.yas 'khyil □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
g.yag rgan rngo lo/rngo ro □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□/□□□□□□□□
g.yag rgan rngo lo tshang □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

g.yag zho 'thung gi 'gyo □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
g.yang byams □□□□□□□□□
g.yang lo □□□□□□□
g.yang rgyal □□□□□□□□□
g.yang tho □□□□□□□
g.yos □□□□□
ga'u □□□□
gcod pa thar □□□□□□□□□□
ge sar □□□□□□
glang sgron skyid □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
glo gzur □□□□□□□□□
gnam lha mkhar □□□□□□□□□□
gnam sa'i ka bzhi, stag mo'i mche bzhi □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
gnam skyid □□□□□□□□□□
gnyan □□□□
go re dmar bo □□□□□□□□□□□□□
gong ba □□□□□□
grags pa rgyal mtshan □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
grwa tshang □□□□□□□□
gser mo □□□□□□□□
gshin rje chos rgyal □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
gson po ri la 'gro ru bcug, gson khrag yul nas g.yo ba ngas mi shes □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
gsur khog □□□□□□□□
gtor ma □□□□□□□
gzu ba □□□□□□
hor □□□□
hor gur mgon □□□□□□□□□□□□□
hu tse □□□□□□
jag □□
jo bo □□□□□□

jo jo lha khang □□□□□□□□□□□□□□
jo khang □□□□□□□
ka chu □□□□□
ka rgya □□□□□□
kab ron □□□□□□□
kan lho □□□□□□□
kha bkug □□□□□□
kha btags □□□□□□□
kha gya □□□□□
kha na kha sems dal ba □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
khri ka □□□□□
khri ka'i mkhar rnying □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
khrom □□□□□
khyod 'u gnyi kar, gsog rgyu'i rgyu med, ston rgyu'i myi med □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
khyod dmar dgo rgyo rin chen lus mi dmar ra, ba glang gi ko dmar ni 'u red □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
khyod kyis mi yi go mi chod, ro yi go yang mi chod □□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
khyod nyid rang gi mi lus rin po che la ser sna med par ba glang gi ko la ser sna yod dam □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

klu tshang □□□□□□□□
Kondro Tsering, mkha' 'gro tshe ring □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
ku mur □□□□□□□
kun bzang skyid □□□□□□□□□□□□□
kun thar skyid □□□□□□□□□□□□□
lA mo □□□□□□
lA mo gong sa'i mchog sprul □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
lA mo'i yongs 'dzin blo bzang mkhas grub rgya mtsho □□□
□□
Labrang, bla brang □□□□□□□□
lag skor □□□□□□□□
Lama, bla ma □□□□□
lan gru □□□□□□□
lcags lo □□□□□□□□
lcags mo byams □□□□□□□□□□□□□
lcam □□□□
lha bla mar lung bstan zhus, yang na bdag 'jig gi bdun
btsugs nas mjal skor la song □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□
□□□□□
lha chas □□□□□□
lha dkar bo □□□□□□□□□□
lha la gtugs pa □□□□□□□□□□□□□
lha mo mtsho □□□□□□□□□□
lha mtsho □□□□□□□
lha pa □□□□□
lha pa'i bu bzhi, gnam gyi ka bzhi □□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□
□□□□□□□□□□
lha rgod thar □□□□□□□□□□
lha sa □□□□□
lha sde □□□□□□□
lhas ra □□□□□□
lo □□□

lo ra □□□□□
lo rgya □□□□□□□
lo sar □□□□□□
Losang Tsewang, blo bzang tshe dbang □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
lta ba yas □□□□□□□□
lug bsad rta chas □□□□□□□□□□□□□□
ma bzhu pa □□□□□□□□
ma Ni □□□□□
mang ra □□□□□
mchod rten □□□□□□□□□□
mda' bzhi □□□□□□□□
mda' mo stong gis bshag dgos □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
mda' ru □□□□□□□
mdo rtse □□□□□□□□
mdzo □□□□
mdzod dge □□□□□□□□□
mdzod dge dpon po □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
me cha □□□□□
mgo mang □□□□□□□□
mgon po don grub □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
mgon rgya □□□□□□□□□
mgon shul □□□□□□□□□
mgur dgon rnam rgyal gling □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
mi dmangs gung hre □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
mi gtsang ba □□□□□□□□□

mi mi yi bdag por sprod ma thub na'ng, ro ro yi bdag por sprod dgos □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

mtshams pa □□□□□□□
mtsho lho □□□□□□□□
mtsho mo □□□□□□□
mtsho sngon □□□□□□□□
mtsho sngon po □□□□□□□□□□□
mu ge thang □□□□□□□□□
myi myi bdag lag la 'jog mi thub na ra, ro ro bdag lag la 'jog dgo ni red □□□□□□□□□□□

phyi hri sde'i 'brong rwa'i gur sha za dgos, nang phu nu'i la bzhag rul ba mi za □□□□

rin chen □□□□□□□□
rje gung thang blo gros □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
rje thar shul dge 'dun chos skyong rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
rlung kha lcog □□□□□□□□□□□
rma lho □□□□□□□
rnam dag khrims ldan gling gi lo rgyus □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
rnga ba blo bzang □□□□□□□□□□□□□
rnga phyags □□□□□□□□
rngo bo □□□□□□□
rnying ba □□□□□□□
rnying ma □□□□□□□
rol lce □□□□□□□□
rol lce dpon po □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
rong bo □□□□□□□
rta bo □□□□□□
rta gro khra sngo khra zhon zhing, mdzo dkar khra rgya khra ded nas, dngul sgor gyis ta len bkang ste □□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
rta gyo khya sngo khya zhon nas, mdzo ka khya rgya khya ded nas, dngul sgor *ta len* nang la blugs nas □□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
rta kha len pa □□□□□□□□□□□
rta lo □□□□□□
rta ra □□□□□
rtsam pa □□□□□□
rtse chu □□□□□□□
rtse khog □□□□□□□
rtsi blugs □□□□□□□□□□
ru sngan □□□□□□□

ru sngan grwa tshang phun tshogs chos gling □□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
ru shor ba □□□□□□□□□
rung chung □□□□□□□□□
sa g.yon 'bri zab mo'i nags □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
sa paN kun dga' rgyal mtshan □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
sa tshig □□□□□
sa tshig phyes □□□□□□□□□□□
sangs rgyas bkra shis □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
sde ba □□□□□□
sde skor □□□□□□□□□
sde skor dbu mdzad □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
sdom pa srung □□□□□□□□□□□□□
seng stag phrug bdun □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
ser rgya □□□□□□□□
sgam bzhon tshang □□□□□□□□□□□□□
sgro ba □□□□□□□
sgrol ma mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□
sha bo □□□□□
sha khra rgod lu gu rtse rtse byos, ma khra mo glag mo
mchong mchong byos □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
sha khya rgod lu gu rtse rtse byos, ma khya mo glag mo
mchong mchong byos □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
sham bha la □□□□□□□□
sher □□□□
sher b+hu □□□□□□□□
shes rab □□□□□□□
shi bo 'gro byed cig phar la ster dgos, gson po 'dug byed cig
shul tu bskyur dgos □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□

shog dmar □□□□□□□□
shug pa □□□□□□
si khron □□□□□□□□
skag □□□
skang nga □□□□□□□
ske ba □□□□□□
skyang rtse □□□□□□□□□
skyang rtse bla ma □□□□□□□□□□□□□□
skye longs □□□□□□□□□□
skyes ho rob □□□□□□□□□□□□
skyes pho rob □□□□□□□□□□□□
skyid cig yod na rang gis khyer, g.yang zhig yod na a mar zhog □□□□□□□□□□□□□□

thang ta □□□□□
thang ta lha pa □□□□□□□□□□
thang ta lha pa ni bdud bya nag gshog ring gi skye mtha' red, kho byang phyogs sham b+ha lar phebs 'dug □□□ □□□□□□□□□□

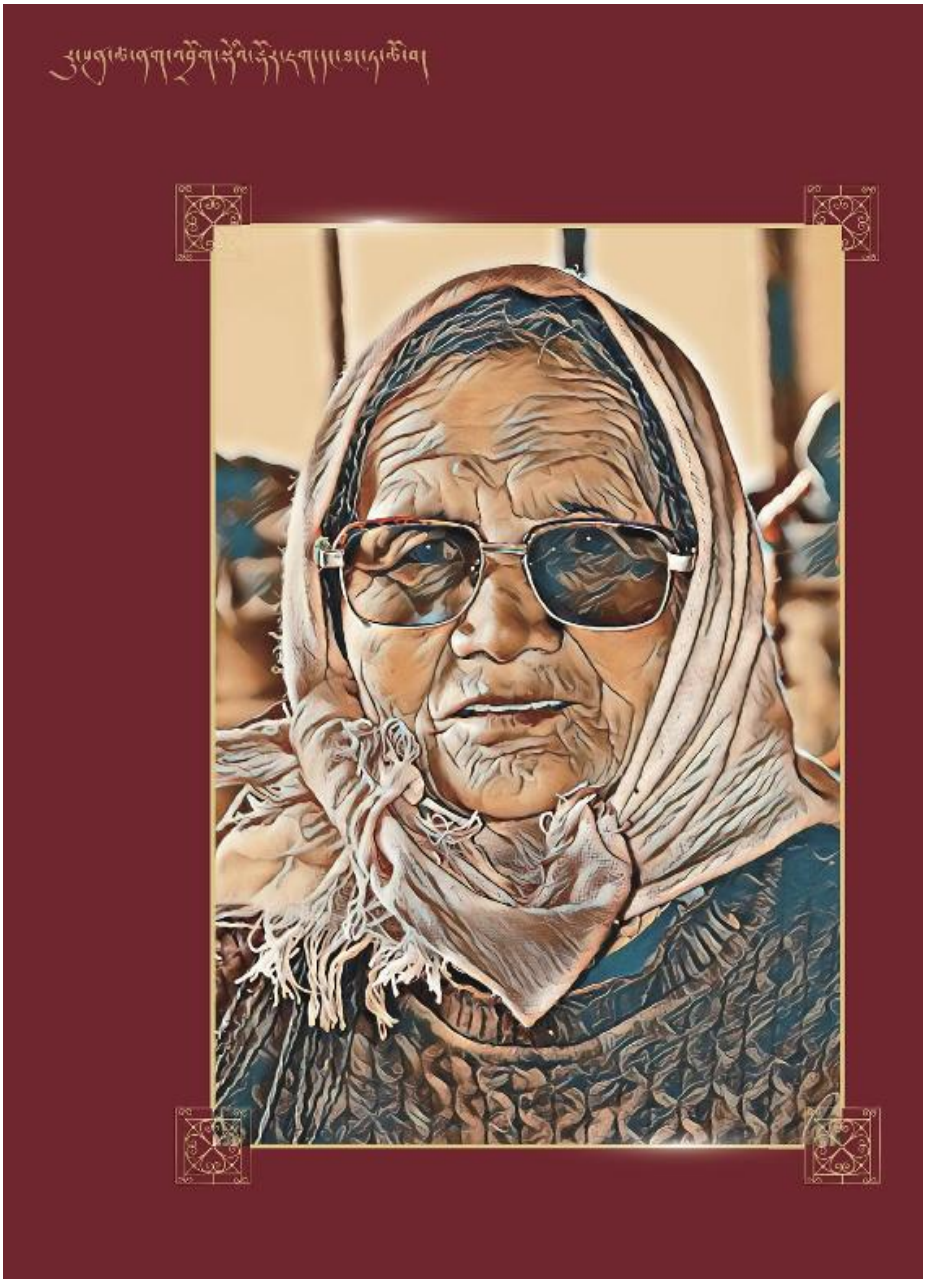
tshogs gnyis 'phel rgyas gling □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
tsi b+he □□□□□□□□
u mtsho □□□□□□□□
wa zhwa □□□□□□
ya men □□□□□□□
yar 'phel □□□□□□□□□
yongs 'dzin rje grags pa rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
yongs 'dzin shes rab rgya mtsho □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
yug ngogs □□□□□□□□□□
yug ngogs gser mo □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
yul lha □□□□□□□□
yul lha thar □□□□□□□□□□□
yum skyabs □□□□□□□□□□□
za 'jab □□□□□□□
za ma dka' ngal gyi lo □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
zangs ngo □□□□□□□□□
zas pha mas bgos na che chung med □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
zhang kang □□□□□□□□
zhi mo thar □□□□□□□□□□
zhis tshang □□□□□□□□□
zhis tshang dpon po □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
zi ling □□□□□□□□□
zi ling kru'u zhi □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

Chinese Terms

Amuquhu □□□□
Bangban □□
Batang □□
Beijing □□
Buluo □□

Chanaihai □□□
Changmu □□
cun □
Dala □□
Dangche □□
Duoshizai □□□
Gajia □□
Gamatang □□□
Ganjia □□
Gannan □□
Gansu □□
Guanxiu □□
Guide □□
Guinan □□
Guomaying □□□
Guomingtang, Guomindang □□□
Hainan □□
Han □
Henan □□
Hualong □□
Huang Weizhong □□□
Huang Zhengming □□□
Huang Zhengqing □□□
Huangnan□□
Hui □
Jiaqing □□
Juese □□
Lade □□
Lanzhou □□
Linxia □□
Luchao Lejia □□□□
Luqu □□
Ma□
Ma Bufang □□□
Maixiu □□
Ming □
Mugetang □□□
Ningmute□□□
Qiecha □□
Qinghai □□
Qukuhu □□□
Sangke □□
Seerjia □□□

Senduo □□
Shanghai □□
Sichuan □□
Suonaihai □□□
Taiwan□□
Taxiu □□
Tianjin □□
Tongde □□
Tongren □□
Wangjia □□
Wanxiu □□
Xiahe □□
Xiashiduo □□□
Xining □□
Xinghai □□
Xu □
Yamen □□
Zeku □□



Notes

[←1]
Here and elsewhere, first-person references refer to Klu thar rgyal.

[←2]

See Klu thar rgyal (2017) for more.

[←3]

A revised version of images from https://binged.it/: (top) 3aAyhzC, (center) 2LLAMBX, and (bottom) 2sSeuHp (accessed 23 January 2020).

[←4]

Located in Mtsho sngon Province unless otherwise indicated.

[←5]

A revised version of the map at https://bit.ly/2J80nar (accessed 12 May 2018).

[←6]

A revised version of the image at https://bit.ly/2sidKKT (accessed 13 May 2018).

[←7]

A revised version of the image at https://bit.ly/2sidKKT (accessed 13 May 2018).

[←8]

The base map is from https://bit.ly/2J80nar (accessed 9 April 2018).

[←9]

Btsun kho (2004:82).

[←10]

"A pa a blo" (LT, A pha a blo) and "Bla dpon a blo" are terms Lo used.

[←11]

A pha a blo's brother, the Fifth 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1916-1947) was the primary religious and political authority and the rebirth in the leading lineage of Bla brang Monastery; his father Mgon po don grub (Huang Weizhong) and other male siblings were the *bla ma's* close functionaries. A pha a blo was a Tibetan *dpon po* 'lord' and as such, was an example of A mdo Tibetan nomad social authority structures. Two of the Fourth Dbal mang's (Huang Zhengming, 1918-1957) brothers were A pha a blo, a key figure in contemporary Gansu, and the Fifth 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa. With two reborn bodhisattvas in the family, as well as Mgon po don grub (the family patriarch), and A pha a blo (the eldest son), this family was among the most powerful in early twentieth century A mdo (Nietupski 2009A, Nietupski 2009B).

[←12]

Btsun kho (2004:71).

[←13]

Btsun kho (2004:70).

[←14]

MLBR (1999:534-538). See Smith (2017:70) for a photo of the monastery.

[←15]

Nian and Bai 1993:185). See Smith (2017:65) for a photo.

[←16]

Nian and Bai (1993:188). See Smith (2017:65) for a photo of the monastery.

[←17]

MLBR (1999:596-597). See Smith (2017:79) for a photo of the monastery.

[←18]

Nian and Bai (1993:197-198).

[←19]
https://bit.ly/2BykGsI, accessed 14 February 2019.

[←20]

Hereafter, I refer to my maternal grandfather as "Lo."

[←21]

On this day, some locals only eat lunch, which is a vegetarian meal (e.g., yogurt, bread, *rtsam pa*, milk tea, fruit). Beverages are generally milk tea and water.

[←22]

Lha pa 'spirit medium' 'trance medium' are explained in detail in Snying bo rgyal and Rino's (2008) study of *lha pa* in northern Reb gong.

[←23]

See https://bit.ly/2ENjrqh (accessed 10 March 2019) for Tsering Shakya's well-researched article on Tibetan banditry. For a brief newspaper report of Tibetan livestock banditry motivated by indebtedness in 2013, see https://bit.ly/2VMIxwf (accessed 10 March 2019).

[←24]

LT: *skyes pho rob*.

[←25]

The local term is *tsa ya* (LT, *dpa' bo*) 'very brave, good at fighting'.

[←26]

Men never asked women for divination.

[←27]

Ma belonged to the Guomindang government that retreated to Taiwan after losing the civil war.

[←28]

In 2019, five of Lo's seven children were living.

[←29]

A guardian deity worshipped by Thang ta Lha pa and his descendants.

[←30]

The red-roofed building and the green-roofed building are sheep shelters belonging to Lo's oldest son, who lives in the building with windows (right). Lo's home is not pictured.

[←31]

"Right" from the perspective of standing outside the tent and looking in.

[←32]

Right-turning White Conch, Precious Umbrella, Victory Banner, Golden Fish, Dharma Wheel, Endless Knot, Lotus Flower, and Treasure Vase (https://bit.ly/2QS31RB, accessed 29 May 2018).

[←33]

See Nangchakja (2016:201-202) for photos of *dmar gdan* in Bon skor Village, Bya mdo Township.

[←34]

Yaks in this area are generally black. White and gray yaks are rare and being able to drink the milk of a hundred white yaks signifies a very long life.

[←35]

LT: A pha Lo

[←36]

Locals avoid saying the name of a deceased person so as not to sadden the deceased's relatives.

[←37]

Jag 'robbery'.

[←38]

Lo refers to a representative of the Ma Bufang government.

[←39]

A class of deities similar to local deities (*yul lha*) who live on the earth, rather than above or below it (https://bit.ly/2LvVVRg, accessed 25 May 2018).

[←40]

In local Tibetan it is Khri ka'i mkhar rnying 'Old Wall of Khri ka County Town'. The earthen wall was built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Locals said building this wall was very hard, there was little time to rest, dust fell on the workers' heads, and grass then grew on their heads as they were building the wall.

[←41]

LT: *khyod nyid rang gi mi lus rin po che la ser sna med par ba glang gi ko la ser sna yod dam.*

[←42]

See Nangchakja (2016:199) for photos of a *ga'u* from Bon skor Village, Bya mdo Township.

[←43]

A cross between a male yak and a cow.

[←44]

A *bla ma* who helps guide the deceased's soul to the next life.

[←45]

A tho explained that elders often used such proverbs as *gnam sa'i ka bzhi, stag mo'i mche bzhi* 'the four poles of sky, the four fangs of the female tiger'. Elders might have asked children riddles such as "What are the poles that hold up the sky?" An answer was that there were four mountain poles. One was Ri rgyal bo ri rab 'King of the Mountains'. A tho did not remember the other mountains' names.

[←46]

When on pilgrimage, locals generally believe that only livestock should be killed for food and hunting animals such as deer is wrong.

[←47]

Lo explained that because the valley was narrow and steep, the distance between the two men was not very great, which made it easier for O rgyam to aim at and shoot the young man.

[←48]

Locals did not steal from their own or nearby communities. Instead, they went to distant communities on bandit raids. This was considered the work of "real men." LT: *Phyi sde ba'i 'brong sha bcud can za dgos, nang phu nu'i shul bzhag rul ba mi za.*

[←49]

Place with a hearth for spending the night.

[←50]

Putting a rifle on the back signifies not ready to shoot while putting it on the shoulder signals alertness, and readiness to shoot.

[←51]

Those whose families have been destroyed by others.

[←52]

Ngag dbang thought he was lucky to get those men, and he did not want misfortune to occur, even from killing an insignificant creature on their way home.

[←53]

Yak with skin disease and little hair, especially on the neck. This is considered an unhealthy yak, and suggests a family is extremely impoverished.

[←54]

Avoid being dizzy by not eating nutritious food such as meat.

[←55]

LT: *Nga rang de la skrag cing zhen pa log.*

[←56]

LT: *Rta gro khra sngo khra zhon zhing, mdzo dkar khra rgya khra ded nas, dngul sgor gyis ta len bkang ste*.

[←57]

See Sangs rgyas bkra shis and Stuart (2014:67) for a relevant photo.

[←58]

By "commune period" I refer to the period 1958-1976 that Lo variously described as *mi dmangs gung hre* 'people's commune', *za ma dka' ngal gyi lo* 'famine year', *nga brgyad lo'i zing 'khrug* 'chaos in 1958', and *rgyu nor gzhung bzhes kyi skabs* 'period of confiscated property'.

[←59]

See Klu thar rgyal (2019:307-318) for a short story about pikas.

[←60]

Unfortunately, I was unable to learn the end of this story.

[←61]

The image became heavier, it was believed, because the deity had entered the image.

[←62]

LT: *Mi mi yi bdag por sprod ma thub na'ng, ro ro yi bdag por sprod dgos.*

[←63]

LT: *Khyod kyis mi yi go mi chod, ro yi go yang mi chod.*

[←64]

Located in Grwa tshang Ravine, fifteen kilometers west of Khri ka County Town, it is known as Bde skyid chu khol 'hot spring of happiness'.

[←65]

Mules are considered stronger than horses.

[←66]

Ma official who controlled Khri ka.

[←67]

When a local family made a new black yak hair tent, locals visited and praised, "Wow! Your family's tent is amazing. It's as good as the Ya men (Yamen)!" Headquarters or residence of a Chinese government official or department. First known use of this term was in 1747 (https://bit.ly/2ZgIvP4, accessed 4 June 2019).

[←68]

Half of a family's property in compensation, for example, if a family had fifty sheep, they needed to pay twenty-five sheep. I am unsure how to present this in LT, hence this explanation: *Rgyu nor gyi phyed ka byin te skyin tshab sprod pa*.

[←69]

I am unsure how they "marked" them. I have participated in rituals in which butter is smeared on an animal's mouth and horns, sacred water is poured on its back, and an amulet is put around its neck. However, in this desperate situation, Thang ta women did not have time for such a ritual.

[←70]

According to Yul lha thar, "Zi ling kru'u zhi" was a term used before 1958 that referred to Ma Bufang.

[←71]

One of the Eight Auspicious Symbols.

[←72]

"For generations" suggests "forever."

[←73]

Locals first cut soil in pieces and dried them in the sun. Next, they set fire to a pile of yak and sheep dung and covered it with pieces of dried earth. Soil was put in between the pieces of dried earth so that the pile smoldered for days. Once the pile stopped smoldering, the dried pieces of earth were red. This "fertilizer" was scattered in fields.

[←74]
Sichuan.

[←75]

See Nangchakja (2016:200) for photos of *ra stod* in Bon skor Village, Byo mdo Township. Nangchakja refers to *ra stod* as *ra 'dogs*.

[←76]

See Nangchakja (2016:197) for photos of *bzho bzung* in Bon skor Village, Bya mdo Township.

[←77]

See Nangchakja (2016:195-196) for photos of *glo gzur*.

[←78]

Local women used red cloth and *shog dmar* 'piece of paper with one red side' to redden their cheeks. The red dye in the cloth and the red paper coloring rubbed off on their cheeks.

[←79]

The Buddha, the teachings of the Buddha, and the community that follows the Buddha's teachings.

[←80]

A term Lo used when he was describing this particular part.

[←81]

LT: *sha khra rgod lu gu rtse rtse byos, ma khra mo glag mo mchong mchong byos.*

[←82]

In the local dialect this is *mi gtsang ba* 'body odor', which is considered negatively. It is believed that the person who has it cannot smell it. A second meaning involves those who venerate *the'u rang*. It is believed that marrying a person from a family who venerated *the'u rang*, brings misfortune to the family or their livestock. *The'u rang* are often considered to be demons by locals who do not worship them.

[←83]

Bag ma'i rin 'brideprice'.

[←84]

Locals often held this rite at the beginning of each year, inviting tantric practitioners, monks, and/or spirit mediums to chant, and beat chanting drums, beseeching local mountain deities to protect the family and their livestock, hoping to avoid misfortune and illness in the coming year.

[←85]

Located in Khri ka County, the Jo jo lha khang was founded by Sa paN kun dga' rgyal mtshan in 1244 (Nian and Bai 1993:185).

[←86]

For a similar account, see Kondro Tsering (2012:101-102).

[←87]

According to the local understanding, "Ban" refers to both Buddhism and Buddhist followers.

[←88]

LT: *'bri zho 'thung du 'gro.*

[←89]

Lcags mo byams could not remember the last two lines, but explained the meaning. I then consulted my oldest maternal uncle (A tho) who suggested the two lines that appear here.

[←90]

Wild leeks were cut into small pieces, mixed with mutton or sheep fat, wrapped in dough, baked in ash, cleaned, and eaten.

[←91]

I thank Sami Honkasalo for writing the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for the livestock terms and the introduction in Appendix One.

[←92]

See e.g., Janhunen and Kalsang Norbu (2014) on Amdo Tibetan segmental phonology.

[←93]

Color names do not distinguish between male and female.

[←94]

The biographies above were composed by religious devotees and focus on the merits of the central character. Information about local life is limited.